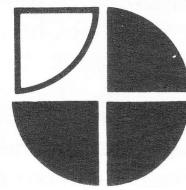


# MISSION FOCUS



## Not a Vacuum But a Drought: Faith Amid Crisis in Socialism

N. GERALD SHENK

It is a strange time to be taking Marxism seriously. Many Christians see in various reports of crisis in socialist societies a decay, a breakdown, a power vacuum, and perhaps an opportunity to take vengeance for historic wounds inflicted on Christian churches during the turbulence of a secular order guided by atheists. The reflections in this paper reconsider the current situation and its implications for the work and witness of the churches. The analysis draws heavily on the author's experiences with churches of Yugoslavia in the free-church tradition.

### Crisis in socialism

From recent headlines one gains the impression that socialism is in terminal decay around the world, from Burma to Poland, from Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union. Economic failures, ethnic violence, and worker unrest erode the confidence of local peasants and foreign bankers alike. *Newsweek* recently proclaimed a "war between the states" here in the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia, highlighting regional and nationalist tensions that culminated in a central meeting of the Communist Party under the glare of highly rated TV coverage. Is this what it looks like, our local newspaper wondered, when a society first turns its back on God, and then God does the same to that society?

The crisis has become real, after early stages of prophetic anticipation and official denial. Taking Yugoslavia as an advanced example, the indicators are numerous. Inflation is running at an annual rate of more than 200 percent. Unemployment has not been hidden, and it is climbing, while productivity is low. Open criticism of social ills in the press accompany decreasing confidence in leadership. We see religious activity expand, yet the stock answers responding to the renewal of quest among generations schooled for spiritual "unmusicality"<sup>1</sup> are shallow.

For years Yugoslavia was the model which attracted the attention of those who hoped for serious reforms in the socialist world. Indeed, when our personal involvement with this country began more than a decade ago, it did seem to

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have the best of both worlds—basic social securities and personal liberties as well as broad public ownership and room for individual small business enterprises. Now, however, it is often dismissed, as if its experimental value was exhausted after a fling with foreign loans which has saddled future generations with huge repayment problems.

### Crisis and change

We should not accept uncritically the widespread notion that current difficulties spell an end to the entire socialist project. To do so, I believe, would limit us in two ways. First, we might exaggerate the possibilities for dramatic changes in the religious life of socialist societies. Second, we might fail to appreciate the long-term significance of small changes which are unfolding in the present.

Across the socialist world, changes are under way with far-reaching consequences. Some of these changes offer the prospect of real improvement in living conditions for millions of our fellow inhabitants on this small globe. Other proposals will merely divert public attention from signals of deeper stress. Loyal and critical opposition may be allowed to take political form; economic production is diversifying into more extensive private ownership; government subsidies in social welfare are being cut drastically, passing costs more directly to consumers.

The new willingness to move forward with wholesale revamping of existing structures, most notably in the Soviet Union during the 1980s, is a direct admission that the old order has been deemed inadequate. The search for new solutions is broad-ranging, pragmatic, and even radical in considering what was only a few years ago unthinkable. It now goes beyond mere tinkering with administrative arrangements in basic production. Like Yugoslavia, now also Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union recognize that economic reforms must be accompanied by substantial political reforms if they are to succeed. And this is the point where church folk have begun to pay closer attention.

### Implications for churches

Too much is often made of the impact on churches as a criterion by which to evaluate larger social change. One would not assess the merits of *perestroika* (restructuring) in the Soviet Union under the ambitious leadership of Secretary Gorbachev by its benefits (or otherwise) to the organizational life of churches alone. Yet when a whole society is convulsed in a crisis with broad consequences, we do well to reassess to what extent that crisis alters the

spiritual landscape also.

Mennonite Central Committee's Europe director Hugo Jantz reports from interviews with *Umsiedler* (ethnic Germans newly arriving from Eastern Europe) that Christians who were almost uniformly skeptical about the prospects for real reform in the socialist system are now changing their tune. Among recent emigres not usually known for optimism about conditions in their homeland, the present situation in their estimation calls for fervent prayer by Christians that the program of reforms in the Soviet Union will actually succeed.

Paul Mojzes likens *perestroika* in the Soviet Union to a ride on a roller coaster, including both excitement and danger.<sup>2</sup> Support by church members is all the more significant when other indications suggest that the room for reformist maneuvers is not broad. Lethargy and passive resistance among entrenched beneficiaries of the existing order may well be strong enough to block many changes and heighten popular frustrations.

Closer inspection suggests a variety of issues at stake for Christians. Assuming that the program of reforms is eventually realized, we may consider separately the organizational interests of existing churches, and the personal benefits for individual church members, in addition to the consequences for a society at large. We leave to others the task of evaluating the overall impact on whole societies, but the distinction between organizational and individual concerns in matters of the faith is worth pursuing further. This distinction must not be overdrawn, since the concerns are thickly interwoven, but current conditions of crisis in socialist societies may have varying impact at different levels of this analysis.

### Organizational concerns

Often designated "religious affairs," these are the institutional concerns connecting state and organized religious communities. Here we see a whole array of contacts, both official and informal, touching on legal, educational, economic, and property matters, among others. During the onset of a social crisis, religious issues at this institutional level seem to move rapidly toward center stage. Long-standing tensions between churches and the state tend to flare up early.<sup>3</sup>

The prominence of attention paid to disputes along these interfaces, however, should not obscure for us an underlying reality of at least minimal cooperation cultivated between religious and political officials. Apart from the basic ideological differences which divide them, each side for its own reasons pursues some form of contact with the other. Public evidence of this process is relatively rare, but a crisis can bring it into the open.

During the past year, a process of constitutional amendments in Yugoslavia brought up the question of revising the provisions on religious activity, even though that was not on the original agenda for the amendment process. Might this be the time to negotiate a better deal for churches? Leading figures in the large Roman Catholic community declared that this round of constitutional revisions was not the proper forum for seeking improvements for the position of churches in society. Churches would work for adjustment at other levels, while professing satisfaction with the basic arrangements and rights provided by the current constitutional order. (This self-restraint in favor of stability may have found its most visible reward in laudable legislative changes in Croatia later that same year to extend health insurance and other

social benefit coverages to theology students, bringing them into a measure of equality with other students after a lobbying campaign of more than a decade.)

More generally, a crisis tends to reinforce the ideological autonomy of the churches and underlines the churches' stake in the sociopolitical order, unless particularist interests (such as ethnic nationalism) are allowed to prevail over the common concern for social well-being and stability.

The crisis does not keep religion in the center of public attention for very long. But increased attention to church-related issues in the early stages of social crisis leads toward more direct reconsideration of the relationship between state and society. Issues of church and state are soon placed in the broader context of society itself.<sup>4</sup> This move can result in further extension of autonomy from ideological direction or control into other areas such as education, artistic expression, environmental concerns, peace and disarmament initiatives, and (quite crucially)

March 1990

Volume 18

Number 1

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**MISSION FOCUS** (ISSN 0164-4696) is published quarterly at 500 S. Main St., Elkhart, Indiana, by Mennonite Board of Missions.

Single copies available without charge. Send correspondence to

Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370. Second-class postage paid at

Elkhart, Indiana, and at additional mailing offices. Lithographed in

USA. Copyright 1990 by Mennonite Board of Missions.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MISSION FOCUS, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370.

the legal realm. Indeed, legal protection for the autonomy of various activities, including religious, in the newly expanded "social space" beyond the former boundaries of strict ideological control becomes a central drama, not usually traced in headline events but monumental in its cumulative effects.

### **Impact on individual spirituality**

Improvements for churches as organizations do not always lead directly to improvement in conditions for spiritual life of the populace at large.<sup>5</sup> If ordinary believers, struggling for the bare necessities of life, see a sudden increase in benefits for religious leaders at public expense, we may anticipate alienation and an increase in criticism of the religious hierarchs as well. We do rejoice, of course, to hear that more advanced training may be available soon for Protestant pastors in Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union. The dearth of solid theological literature is being relieved in many countries by relief on import restrictions, and even better, by extensive new publications within the countries, as Yugoslavia has experienced for more than two decades now. A flurry of new international exchanges brings new encouragement to believers previously isolated from the larger church.

None of these new advantages, however, should be considered key indicators of the impact of crisis on individual spirituality. The real test facing the churches in this moment is in the quality of their pastoral care for members. Otherwise, given the limited resources available at the organizational level, existing leadership is in danger of following the direction of the latest permissions into endless new auxiliary activities, especially those for which foreign funding can easily be secured. Ironically, the sudden removal of restrictions can be almost as disruptive as an onslaught of new repression. Pastoral care is the crucial quality which distinguishes the church from a set of schools, publishing houses, and travel agencies.

The tasks of spiritual leadership require an open recognition that the erosion of public confidence during what is well termed the "dusk of ideology" has profound spiritual consequences for personal and collective life. If it would be unfair to add to the general instability by taking institutional advantage of hard times, it would be equally irresponsible to ignore the impact on believers in their everyday life.

Suspicion, uncertainty, and interpersonal tensions flare up as economic and political conditions erode. While some have the energy to consider new and radical changes amidst the decay of an aging social order, many are dismayed and threatened by the extent of changes compressed into a very short time.

Tensions that mount at work and in the home overflow into the church. Crisis is said to direct people toward God again after years and decades of neglect. It can and does return some people to the churches, but they can be just as critical of what they find there. Some take comfort in a return to the archaic certainties of village ancestors and the unchanged rhythms of ancient liturgies. Others will not find real solace in the old ways of traditional religious groups; their pressing needs are not met by the old formulas for unmoved masses led by unresponsive hierarchies.

Only a renewal of pastoral care can make the church truly available to its own members' needs during the time of deepening crisis. This goal requires a sober reappraisal of diversions to be avoided and roads not be taken.

### **Power vacuum: political metaphor**

A rapid or extended decline in the fortunes of socialist society could lead the largest and strongest religious communities into a seriously mistaken strategy. Most of them in Yugoslavia (Orthodox, Catholic, and Islamic) have had centuries of experience with the advantages of links with secular power. Church/state relations in the region have been defined primarily by the ongoing struggle for dominance in secular affairs, that most ruinous aspect of the European Christendom legacy in both its Eastern and Western variants.

Under Marxist guidance, these societies have staked their legitimacy on improvements in the material conditions of human existence. Economic decline is not only embarrassing, in this scheme it erodes loyalties and lends new credibility to social alternatives rooted in other, often older sources of legitimacy. A decay in the ordering functions of the ruling ideology, to the point that even its official bearers scramble to outdo each other in knowing skepticism toward its credibility, results in a power vacuum that attracts both positive and negative impulses. One observer terms it "emancipation in decay."<sup>6</sup>

### **Reasons for restraint**

This ancient struggle over secular power and influence is a game which churches must strain to avoid at this critical juncture. The notion of a power vacuum is a metaphor of political decay, not an analysis of a spiritual condition. The reasons for caution are several.

First, the churches do not enter (or exit) a general social crisis with a blank slate. They also have a past and a legacy of not fully realized ideals. Their own performance history, after all, includes some of the seeds of harsh, repressive, even vicious forms which secular reaction took among these peoples during the twentieth century. To rejoin the ancient battle for control of society is finally to betray the peaceable reign of God for a pot of stewed cabbage. Size factors may protect the tiny Protestant groups from this temptation in most cases, but Catholics and Orthodox are not alone in vulnerability toward the perception of a political power vacuum.

Second, although real changes are under way, the churches must plan to deal with the same basic social and political order for a long time to come. It is the part of practical wisdom to reckon on a fair amount of system continuity, no matter how dramatic the current crisis becomes. Those who defend and those who denounce the present order in strident tones are all part of a single reality, a social and political complex that will have durable consequences, however radical the reforms instituted. The basic social reality for the churches shows remarkable continuity even through wars and revolutions, as many old jokes remind us.

Even though a current wisecrack defines socialism as "the longest and most painful path from capitalism to capitalism," neither a charismatic reformer such as Mr. Gorbachev nor a sweeping overhaul of the social regulatory mechanisms will achieve a magical exchange of one set of social conditions for a completely different set. No magical wand is about to wave the forces of communism or even historical atheism off the map, replacing them with friendly powers to encourage the growth of churches. Though we know that no system lasts forever, much of the present cultural complex will remain, and that conviction should prevent unseemly gloating over the ideological deadends of discredited public leaders.

Third, the life of churches in these regions is perpetually subject to the larger reality of endless bureaucratic regulation. It seems that permissions are required for every aspect of life, be it large or small. Indeed, the privilege of regulating the records of such basic functions as birth, marriage, and death was one of the first to be wrested from the churches by the socialist authorities following the revolution. Similar sensitivity extends to borders and the flow of people, goods and ideas across national and cultural boundaries. Yugoslavia, even after several decades of gradual progress toward a more open social system, retains much of the structure for extensive regulation. This is an obdurate fact of life for the churches of the region, and many other things would need to change before this feature is significantly altered for the churches.

A further impulse to caution for us is the rebuke of Jonah, who had been content to sit and watch the collapse of that great city he detested, wicked Nineveh. Having delivered his denunciations, he relished the prospect of observing the destruction, yet God had a bitter lesson for him: even an "evil empire" is not beyond the reach of God's mercy. Jonah's mission to that society succeeded, according to our account, and to his own mistaken dismay.

### No refuge in separation

The churches in these lands have long taken refuge in the rigorous separation of religion from the political sphere as mandated by constitutional provisions, but this is no longer an adequate reason for avoiding public responsibility, a civic awareness of the traumas experienced by ordinary citizens. As central authorities fall into dismay over an inability to legislate solutions for urgent human needs, the churches must seek faithful responses at the local level, throwing their weight behind every effort at human solidarity and compassion. Amid dramatic declines in living standards, the followers of Christ have a new opportunity to explore the joyful sacrifices of sharing resources more effectively, even while bureaucrats around them resort to much resented restrictions.

It is time for Christians to assert with full confidence that God has not abandoned the peoples of socialist societies. No matter how turbulent become the discontents of socialist modernity, this is not the hour for greedy pursuit of organizational advantages for the churches at the expense of the socialist system.

We need a double dose of skepticism these days. The first is taken with journalist reports that highlight only the traumas, bringing prompt word of potential tremors but hardly ever noting the "newsless" event when a semblance of normalcy is restored. "Chicken Little" stories about the pending crash of a wayward satellite far outnumber the reports on its uneventful demise in a remote corner of ocean. In the case of the Yugoslav "war between the states," which we found on the cover of *Newsweek* at our local kiosk, not a single word appeared during the following month to indicate that the acute tensions had been successfully defused.

The second dose of skepticism should be administered when we hear sweeping claims of the possibilities for Christian expansion while socialist systems are convulsed in turmoil. Inasmuch as real improvements for the churches are possible, they should not be trumpeted as evidence of a defeat for other temporal powers.

At the same time, we must recognize an openness for change, including elements that are genuine and hopeful. This is no time to sit under the vine and await the collapse.

We have a calling and a duty in every land to offer prayer support and goodwill toward authorities who are responsible before God to secure order and protect the innocent, making room for the goodness of ordinary life. Where these ordering functions are fulfilled by Marxist powers, our duty is not diminished by the fact of their philosophical atheism or their historic antipathy toward the corruptions of institutional power in the churches.

Now we observe that communist authorities are losing the effective sanctions once wielded to prevent believers from "fanatically" living out their faith. The rewards of privilege and security, jobs, education, and health care are declining for all but a very small elite. Believers fare little worse than others, when all face reduced living standards and new limits on social services. This, too, can increase freedom for authentic devotion to take practical effect in ordinary life.

### Conclusion

So before we call down the curtain of history on the socialist chapter, Christians would do well to reflect on the enduring impact which Marxism and the socialist experiment have had on our century. They have placed their goals on the agenda of many societies—basic social security, the dignity of human labor, and an egalitarian commitment. Even in failure, they set the mark against which other efforts continue to be measured. Churches will not go far by preaching the virtues of insecurity and inequality, just because the Marxist project is stumbling spectacularly near the edge of the stage.

We must prepare ourselves to show compassion for ideological opponents now seized with misgivings and haunting doubts. More than depression at the bottom of a cycle awaits those who place their final confidence in the benefits of material production. We have never agreed to reduce our faith to nationalism or an ideology in competition with Marxism. The points of comparison and contrast are always available for dialogue, but the truth we live for is not distracted by cycles of the economy.

We should renew our dialogue with nominal Christianity, not just at its organizational centers, but in its far-flung corners as well. We do not know how dark the night must become before the remaining light in the large traditional churches again becomes a source of true hope and sustenance for the unmoved masses. But we Protestants in the free-church heritage are custodians of a more intense concentration, for some moderns a more accessible reformulation, of ancient truths translated into life.

Rather than a power vacuum opening new temptations for secular power and historic vengeance, we see in the religious organizations the withered fruits of a lengthy spiritual drought. Unwatered by the recognition of God's graceful dealings with our neighbors and communities, whole regions have fallen into a neglect of spiritual roots. Whole generations have gone long without nurturing that everyday awareness of the creating, sustaining power that walked among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Factual acquaintance with salvation history, the minimal knowledge that even the average "unchurched" North American recalls from childhood, has fallen to very low levels in these parts of Europe. Yet there remains an incipient awareness embedded within the various cultures, even a resonance with the things of the spirit that neglect and counterfeits have not entirely erased. A recent conference of European piano teachers, meeting in Yugoslavia, included a presentation by a musician from

the Soviet Union. His lecture drew special attention because, in contrast to his predecessors of earlier years, the woodenness of prescribed ideology had been removed. In its place came a call for a restoration of spiritual insight in teaching music, a return to the values of truth, goodness, and beauty. Chief sources cited? Augustine and Dostoevsky.

There is now more thirst than ever before in socialist society for a calm and confident effort to put our best knowledge of truth and goodness and beauty to the test of life under pressure. Let us have done with dire predictions and detours into the vacuum of political power and gloating over the demise of socialist systems. In the dusk of ideology, a sober renewal of pastoral care becomes the most attractive feature of life together in faith. In this task the churches face no serious competition whatsoever. The drought has lasted long enough.

#### Notes

1. The literature on crisis in Yugoslavia is extensive. Sociologist Zdenko Roter of the University of Ljubljana calls it "a 'long-wave' crisis, deep and structural. It encompasses all sectors of societal and individual existence, from the economy, culture, and education to politics, morality, and religion. Individual and social life as a whole is disturbed." Zdenko Roter, "Yugoslavia at the Crossroads: A Sociological Discourse," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (May 1989), p. 11. Cf. also Silvano Bolcic, *Razvoj i kriza jugoslovenskog drustva u socioloskoj perspektivi* (Beograd: Studentski izdavacki centar, 1983); Josip Zupanov, *Marginalije o drustvenoj krizi* (Zagreb: Globus, 1983). On specifically religious dimensions of crisis, cf. Srdjan Vrcan, *Od krize religije k religiji krize* (Zagreb: Skolska knjiga, 1986).

2. Paul Mojzes, "On a Roller Coaster: Religion and Perestroika," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (October 1988), p. 22.

3. These dynamics for the early stage in Yugoslavia are traced in my dissertation on the public debate of *The Social Role of Religion in Contemporary Yugoslavia* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1987).

4. Cf. interview with Ivan Prpic, "Drustvo i drzava," *Nase teme* (Zagreb), Vol. 32, No. 5, May 1988, pp. 1147-1165.

5. Outlining pitfalls in the study of church-state relations, Pedro Ramet has framed a similar question most cogently: "Should a worsening of church-state relations in a communist state necessarily be assumed to be welcome to state authorities or inimical to the faith itself?" See Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 182.

6. Timothy Garton Ash, "The Empire in Decay," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 35, No. 14 (September 29, 1988), p. 56; the same author's later collection of essays on Central Europe is the best current resource for understanding the background of sweeping changes at the end of the decade: *The Uses of Adversity* (New York: Random House).

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**Author's postscript:** *This article originated at the end of 1988, prior to the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe during 1989. Its focus of concern can now be applied to the further developments in the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Romania as well. The unfolding drama has reinforced the conviction that churches have a crucial role to play in the quest for peaceful but radical change.*

## Old and New Possibilities for Mission in Eastern Europe

HUGO JANTZ

The ripples of change of the early Gorbachev era have become a tidal wave. The question for all Eastern Europe is no longer if, but when, how rapid, and how profound the changes will be. Most dramatic has been the puncturing of the Wall until it has become merely a symbol of the infamous barrier.

The joy is obvious, often accompanied by tears. It was deeply moving to stand at the Potsdam opening in the Wall and see people and Trabis (East German cars) passing in both directions through a huge breach in that once impregnable barrier. It is the most beautiful gap in all the world.

We have seen, in the course of recent administrative visits, the effects of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR,

Poland, Yugoslavia, and now Eastern Germany and East Berlin. We have seen it and wrestled with the questions: "What is our mission now?" and "How should we respond?"

#### Responding to changes

It seems that, before all else, we have much to learn in the face of the new reality. How easily the North American mentality would lead us to plunge into the new "openings" to do our strategical thing. It probably involves learning that change in Eastern Europe does not mean a change to Western forms of capitalism and democracy.

Among many other things, we in the church, we who are so consciously in mission, ought to learn to understand how Christian faith and life, in and out of the church, were a factor in what is happening in Eastern Europe today.

For seven decades in the USSR and more than four in the rest of Eastern European countries, Christians and people of genuine goodwill have absorbed indignities, abuse, torture, and discrimination. They have lost their

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families, their freedom, their social and work position, their property and their lives. What do we know about this kind of cross bearing and the resurrection that must follow? Can we take our place beside those who thus bore the cross—and can we take any effective action—until we at least begin to understand and identify with the experience and the theology that were forged in the crucible of suffering? Perhaps a major factor leading Gorbachev and others to *glasnost* and *perestroika* is the effect of generations of Christians and uncounted thousands of godly men and women remaining faithful unto death, not overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good (Rom. 23:21). We do well to ponder such a possibility and to discover its meaning for us.

For at least a decade and a half, a significant movement has happened among the intelligentsia of, for instance, the Soviet Union. Profoundly disillusioned by the failure of the system, the philosophical and theological hollowness of its ideology, and the self-seeking corruption of the great and the not-so-great, they began to seek another way. For many the way led to Christian faith and the Orthodox Church. It seems of vital importance to understand that journey and its effect on changes in the Soviet Union and other Eastern countries. An important question is: "Why do the majority of converted intellectuals move into the Orthodox Church?"

We are told that, especially in the Soviet Union, the exiling of Christians to work camps in every part of the country has brought the reality of Christ and the church to every major population center, new and old. No mission strategy could have done it as well, we are told. What can we learn from this, together with our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe?

After decades of the promotion and promulgation of atheism in Eastern Europe, there seems a greater awareness of God and less of a spirit of secularism in Eastern Europe than in the West. Has the Spirit of God rushed, like a powerful wind from heaven, into the vacuum? We need to learn to understand this phenomenon.

All who have followed the developments in East Germany have been impressed and deeply moved by the very visible and audible role of the church. It was thrilling to see pastors, very low-key, sending people onto the streets to demonstrate nonviolently, and then to view those demonstrations, even when augmented by tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, remain nonviolent. Suddenly, it seemed, the people were speaking, by word and action, in categories that left armed police and soldiers powerless.

### **Some possible opportunities for mission in Eastern Europe**

One approach would be to commission our best church statesmen, oriented to servanthood, to work alongside church leaders in the countries now open for such a ministry. I am thinking of an extended tour of ministry similar to what Jacob Tilitsky undertook in May and June 1989. Much time should be available to talk one to one, to small groups, and to gatherings of church leaders, as they wrestle with being the church in a context of freedom.

I think we have Christian intellectuals in North America and Western Europe who can dialogue and worship together with their East European counterparts and experience enormous mutual enrichment. This would involve the important component of interpreting Western

church and society, with all our wrinkles, to them.

In most socialist countries, industry, business, agriculture, and social services are in shambles. Some governments are willing to accept help from anywhere and from anyone. The church, until only recently ordered to stay within the four walls of its meeting places, is now being challenged to become involved in cleaning up the mess and in rebuilding. The church knows little about getting people involved, though voluntary service to the old, the chronically ill, and to patients in psychiatric wards is beginning to take place. The efforts of the church are made more complicated by bureaucratic barriers and inefficiency.

It appears that we could respond to these needs in several ways:

1. By finding well-experienced, culture-sensitive, and flexible consultants to work with the church and government leaders responsible for church-based voluntary service. Such persons might be able to conduct seminars in strategic places and institutions, e.g., being resources to people working with geriatric and psychiatric patients.

2. Poland and Yugoslavia might be especially open to the kind of help Mennonite Central Committee gives in agricultural development, and MEDA or SELF-HELP, in the area of cottage and small industry.

It should now be possible to develop a more efficient, better targeted, and more even flow of Bibles as well as Christian and biblical literature to Eastern countries. The euphoria over the "wide open doors" must not blind us to the possibility of corrupt and unfair entrepreneurial exploitation of this aspect of the Eastern European reality. We need to have people with vision and good business sense help us with this very important ministry.

It seems almost every institution/seminary-trained church worker would be willing to accept one or all of the following resource people to work and teach with their respective faculties:

1. People who can communicate by life and word Anabaptist thought and history.

2. People who can help train prospective church workers and even pastors already in service in pastoral counseling and biblical, exegetical preaching.

3. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers. Because of the dearth of biblical literature in East European languages, it is an advantage, for the present, for seminary-level students to learn to read English.

Many brothers and sisters in the Eastern countries could benefit from spending time in both Western churches and society and in the third world. Mennonite agencies could help facilitate this.

We are told there are some 25 well-trained young Christians in East Germany who would be willing to serve as volunteers in other countries, including third-world countries. We believe MCC, for instance, should try with concerted effort to make this happen. The effect of such an experience on people who have been forcibly isolated from interaction with the rest of the world could be enormous, and the message they might carry back to their home churches could multiply the effect.

We need also to work harder and more carefully at finding people in the Eastern countries for the MCC

Intermenno Program. This is fraught with problems, but we must simply do the best we can.

### Some concerns

There are Mennonites in the Soviet Union and in East Germany only. Should we start Mennonite mission work with the goal of starting "Mennonite" churches? Or should we be what we can be to all churches, simply to bring our particular witness to as broad a spectrum of church and society as possible?

How do we engage in mission, when almost all of our present contacts in Eastern countries are with church leaders whose prestige and authority tend to decrease as *glasnost* and *perestroika* increase? How can we begin to relate in effective ways to the new and younger generation of leaders who are now emerging or are waiting in the wings? Great wisdom and some courage are called for here.

## An Incarnational Approach to Mission in Modern Affluent Societies

LINFORD STUTZMAN

Why do our efforts of sharing the gospel in modern, affluent societies have so little impact in contrast to the revolutionary effects that the witness of Jesus, Paul, and Hans Hut had in their societies? Are modern, affluent societies so fundamentally different from earlier societies that the good news is no longer perceived to be especially good or even particularly threatening? Are post-Enlightenment changes such as rationalism, mass affluence, urbanization, and technology to blame for the apathy? Perhaps the problem is not so much that society has changed but that the church and its missionaries have changed in relation to society. Let us examine this possibility.

### Social location: A crucial feature of the incarnation and authentic witness

It was not identification with humankind in general that shaped the nature of Jesus' ministry, rather it was the deliberate identification with particular social groupings within his society which affected how his ministry was perceived—the impact of his words, how the good news of the kingdom was communicated, to whom it appealed, and to whom it sounded threatening.

The location of the Anabaptists in sixteenth-century European society, although not necessarily chosen, could be seen as crucial in determining the message, method, and impact of the early Anabaptist movement's evangelists.

It seems that missionaries of the Mennonite Church of North America generally occupy a position within society which is fundamentally different from that of Jesus, the early church, or the Anabaptist movement. This social location works as a handicap, giving rise to inauthentic methods of proclaiming the good news, restricting the prophetic content of the message, and minimizing the impact of the missionary's endeavor on the whole society. Why and how does this occur?

### The strategic approach to mission: Beginning in the wrong place

The serious missionary, working in what Newbigin calls the "most challenging missionary frontier of our time" (1968:20), likely responds to the initial lack of impact of his or her efforts by thinking strategically. This is understandable. The trained missionary has been taught to think

strategically, and the society in which the missionary works reinforces the strategic approach to problems of "marketing." There seems to be no other alternative.

The strategic approach focuses on the felt needs of individuals in society and the identification of "target groups." These target groups generally fall into two basic categories—the obviously needy and the disguised needy. The obviously needy, according to the standards of modern, affluent society, are the "losers," such as the unemployed, uneducated, criminals, and addicts. They are a minority and tend to be from the lower socioeconomic classes. The missionary either seeks to identify with the obviously needy or to extend ministry to them from a socially distant position. In either case, church planting among the obviously needy tends to be slow and extremely difficult.

The disguised needy are the majority of society with very real but less obvious problems such as loneliness, guilt, lack of fulfillment, or starvation for love. The disguised needy tend to be from the middle and upper socioeconomic classes. The strategic-thinking missionary is likely to be attracted to this target group for many reasons: for its sheer size, for the nature of needs which seem ready-made for the gospel, and for the prospect of building a church among financially successful, goal-oriented, energetic, and organized individuals.

By strategically selecting the needs-determined target group, the missionary inevitably locates him- or herself socially and from there seeks to adapt the message to the needs of the target group. Strategic thinking, influenced by the secular market-based approach, cannot do otherwise, for the consumers personally determine the nature of their needs and select their solutions. Newbigin observes: "In contrast to traditional societies, modern Western society leaves its members free ... to adopt and hold their own views about what is good and desirable ..." (1968:16).

This is not to say that the gospel does not meet the felt needs of individuals, but it does indicate how the message is shaped by strategic thinking. Tending to weaken the prophetic, revolutionary character of the gospel within society, it ends with a message tailored to meet the self-diagnosed problems of individuals. The appeal of the gospel is limited to individuals, and any possible social impact is likely contained within specific social groupings.

What is wrong with the strategic approach if churches are being planted in the process? Australian Stuart Fowler comments:

*The result is that, in spite of having, in principle, the same world-shaking, liberating faith as the first century disciples, we . . . are not seriously disturbing the world order of our day as those disciples disturbed the first century world order. The world has neutralized us most effectively by containing us within a narrowly confined area of life in a pact of peaceful coexistence. The price we pay is a fundamental mutilation of the gospel. (1983:55)*

As Anabaptist missionaries we seek to be not only effective, but faithful to Jesus' example as well. What are the alternatives to the strategic approach which enable both effective and faithful mission to happen, which enable us to be like Jesus in the world?

### **The social spectrum: A tool for an incarnational approach**

Jesus told his disciples to "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35b). Donald McGavran urges missionaries to "develop church growth eyes" (1980:185) by doing sociological research. Are Jesus and McGavran urging us to do exactly the same thing?

The modern scientific method has given rise to a completely different way of understanding society than that of Jesus' disciples. Modern sociology determines the various groupings within society, not by measuring receptivity to the gospel, but rather by measuring, among other things, the socioeconomic levels according to established criteria. Missiological analysis of a given society's receptivity to the gospel is measured in terms of these existing categories which seem to be appropriate and helpful tools for strategic purposes.

What is needed for understanding the incarnational approach is a framework for determining social groupings according to receptivity of the good news rather than socioeconomic categories and felt needs of individuals. The model of society which follows attempts this by using the criteria of *marginality, power, and hope*. By looking at society in this way, it may be possible to identify Jesus' social location and why it was chosen. It may be possible to understand where change (receptivity and conversion) is most likely to occur, not only at the individual level, but in society as a whole. Finally, it may enable the church in its mission to be *socially* in modern, affluent societies, like Jesus was in his.

*Marginality* describes the minority in modern affluent societies that is not integrated into the mainstream Majority of society for various reasons. Relationships of the Marginalized are often characterized by individual or group isolation. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the Establishment minority who represent institutional and social power within society. Relationships of the Establishment may be highly organized and institutionally determined. Between the Marginalized and Establishment minorities are the Majority who, although not directly involved at the top levels of power, nevertheless participate in and benefit from it. The Majority are socially integrated with organic and organizational networks and are marginalized only from the top levels of institutional power occupied by the Establishment minority.

*Power* is closely related to marginalization. The distinctions are between the kinds of power available across the

spectrum. The marginalized end of the spectrum is characterized by the lack of power to change either self or circumstances for the better. The power here tends to be reactionary, survival power which often takes negative and destructive forms. It may be chaotic and unpredictable and illicit fear in others. It is viewed from the Establishment perspective as illegitimate power.

"Legitimate" power is concentrated on the other extreme end of the social spectrum. It tends to be stable and predictable and is used to preserve the status quo of society and its institutions.

Between the two extreme ends of the spectrum is the Majority. Two basic options of power, originating from opposite ends of the spectrum, appeal to the Majority who have the freedom to choose how to respond. One option is for individuals in the Majority to align themselves with the institutional power of the Establishment in hopes of maintaining or improving the status quo. This is a most popular choice in times of prosperity and stability because of the apparent success of the Establishment promises.

The other option originates because of the apparent inadequacies of the status quo, the failure of the Establishment to "deliver the goods" it has promised. The power of the disenchanted of the Majority is often expressed in the form of ideals, visions, and dreams which become popular, forming the basis for "people movements," calls for revolution, and in extreme cases, the use of popularly supported violence.

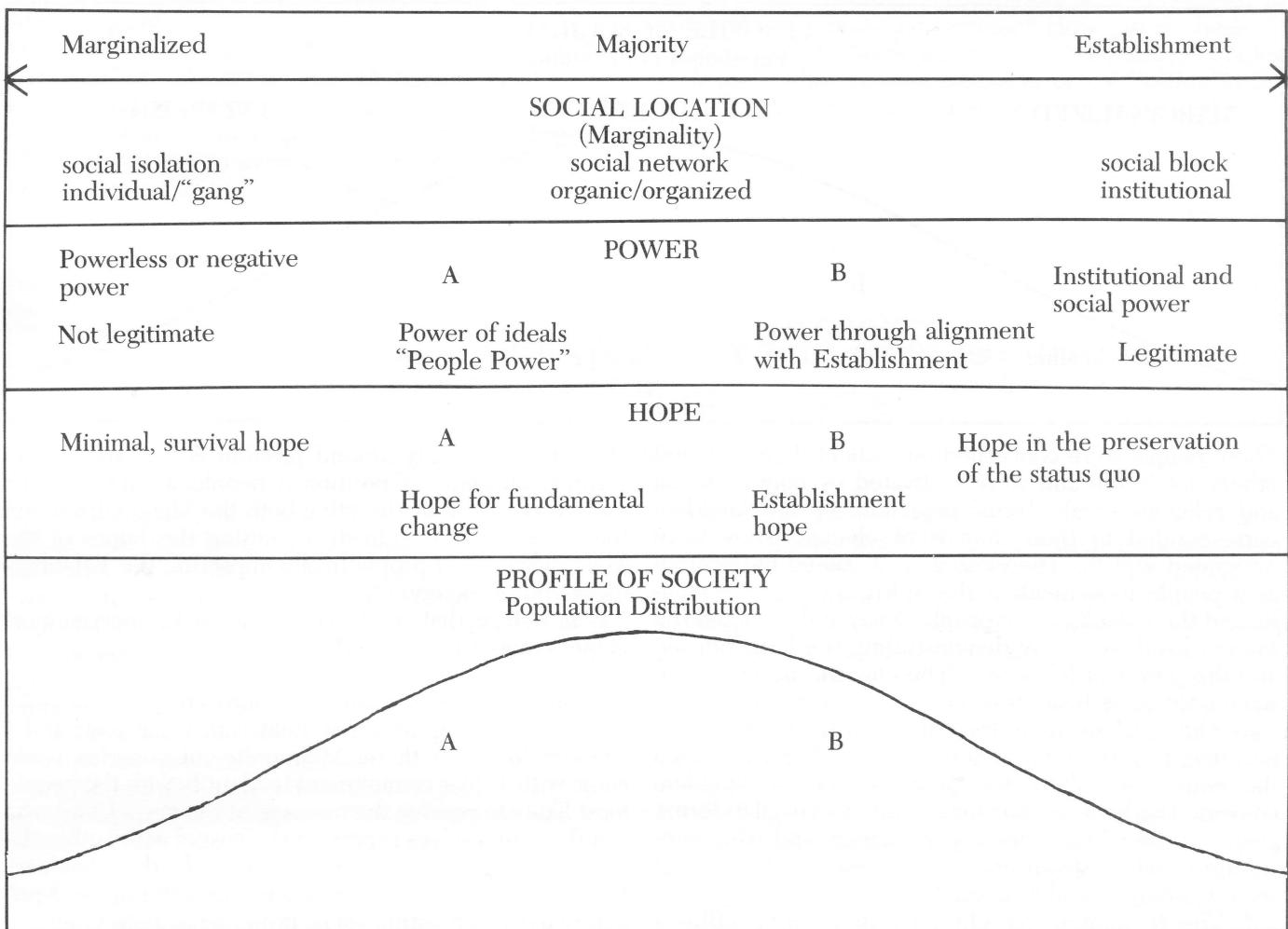
The last category, *hope*, relates closely to the power choices. The Marginalized at one extreme end of the spectrum have little motivational hope, sometimes expressing this hopelessness in destructive behavior toward themselves, others, or both. Hope, however, can be potentially raised from outside of this category. On the opposite end of the spectrum are those whose hope lies in the preservation or improvement of the status quo. Hope in this category tends to be at once conservative and pragmatically concerned with self-preservation.

For the Majority between the two extremes, hope is alive, at least potentially, and has two basic options. From the side of the Establishment comes the enticement of the status quo and the possibility of progress for society in general and personal happiness in particular. The values of the Establishment, with their conservative and self-preserving bias, seem to be obviously correct to many of the Majority, and their hope is basically the Establishment hope of working within the status quo.

The other basic hope option originates from the Marginalized end of the social spectrum, for it is there that the human needs are most obvious and the deficiencies of the status quo are most evident. Hope takes the form of visions for the possibility of a better world. This kind of hope may result in people calling for fundamental social change. People movements of all kinds, including violent revolution, rise out of people in the Majority category who are motivated by hope of change to the extent that they are willing to take personal risks in order to achieve and participate in a new social reality. This kind of hope of the Majority can potentially arouse the attention and even raise the hopes of the Marginalized. This sharing of hope can result in a solidarity of some of the Marginalized with many of the Majority. It can eventually impact all of society. It threatens the Establishment.

Diagram A on the following page represents the social spectrum of modern, affluent societies using the categories above.

Diagram A



The position on the spectrum is not established solely by socioeconomic status. This is a factor, but in modern, affluent societies the freedom of choice in the area of values combined with the access to information permits movement horizontally on the spectrum.

Major shifts among the largest portion of society's members occurs rather easily between A and B in terms of both power and hope, depending on the social climate. This can occur without necessarily breaking the organic/organizational relationships of the Majority category. The extreme ends of the spectrum can be seen as being more static.

The minorities on the opposite ends of the spectrum have the least in common and, therefore, the least impact on each other in terms of substantial social change. The Majority, located socially next to both the Marginalized and the Establishment minorities, has the potential of impacting both.

Several additional observations, when placed against the backdrop of this view of society, will help to understand how “God uses social forces to bring men under the influence of the gospel” (Pickett 1933:168). What role do human aspirations, visionary longings, and utopian dreams play in receptivity?

It would seem that much of these could be classified as a basic God-given “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” a longing for justice, peace, and goodness—in short, a longing for the kingdom. These longings are fostered

whenever human failure and evil is apparent in society. In times when the social conditions are ripe, they result in “people movements.”

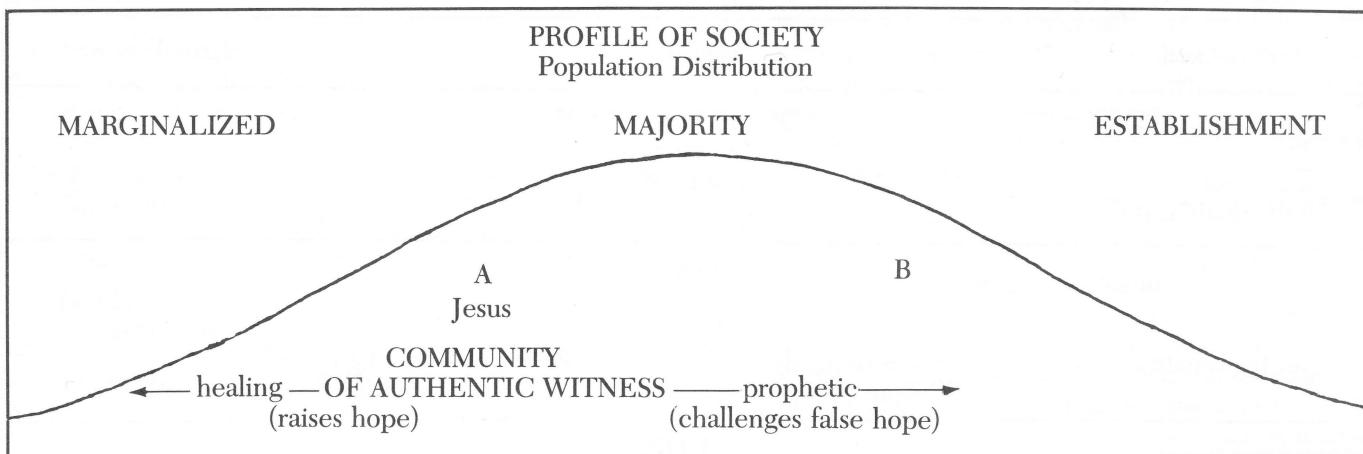
It would seem that authentic Christian movements, beginning with the early church and occurring throughout history, including the <sup>1</sup>Labaptist movement, occur when the Spirit of God intersects with the aspirations of people, the human longings for the kingdom. These could be called “people movements of the Spirit” rather than either “people movements” or “spiritual movements.”

Based on these observations, several hypotheses can now be made.

1. Jesus incarnated and preached the good news of the kingdom from social position A within the social spectrum. His message made immediate sense to those in social position A, whose hope lay in the possibility for immediate change. From this position, Jesus exposed the fallacy of Establishment hope. At the same time he refused the use of coercive power and violence. Jesus raised the hope of the Marginalized from a position of proximity. Because of this proximity, Jesus' message was at once both popular to those toward the marginalized end of the spectrum and threatening to those toward the other end.

2. Although individuals were attracted from both extremes of the spectrum, the church emerged from within the middle category, primarily around position A among those whose hope lay in the possibility for change and were ready to take personal risks in order to achieve it.

### Diagram B



These people were concerned both about their own and others' lot in life and were motivated by popular social and religious ideals. Jesus' preaching of the kingdom corresponded to their dreams of change. They were integrated socially. The church, as it gained momentum as a people movement of the Spirit, increasingly challenged the Establishment prophetically and attracted the Marginalized by visibly demonstrating the kingdom life and the power of Jesus' way. The church, socially in the same position as Jesus, was the "authentic witness."

3. The Anabaptist movement, as with other people movements of the Spirit before and after, began in much the same way, where the preaching of the kingdom coincided with the longing for the kingdom in all its forms, among those whose hope lay in change, and who were willing to take risks in order to achieve it—that part of society around social position A.

4. The temptation for churches in modern, affluent societies is to locate socially around position B. From this position the church attempts to reach individuals from all parts of the spectrum but succeeds mainly with those around position B. The church in this position tends to ignore, condemn, or "evangelize" individuals in social position A. This results in the "fundamental mutilation of the gospel" mentioned earlier.

The social position of Jesus and the community of authentic witness is illustrated in Diagram B.

## The incarnational approach

## *Choosing the social location of Jesus*

It would seem very difficult for the missionary and the emerging church to represent the good news of the kingdom as Jesus did in the world without being socially in the world as Jesus was. Authenticity in witness begins, then, with the fundamental choice of the incarnation: the social location of the witness within society. Can the church in its mission in modern, affluent societies choose to be socially like Jesus was in his society? It seems that this is indeed possible.

My recent survey done with five churches started by Mennonites in the city of Dublin, London, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Munich indicates that Mennonite missionaries and the churches they have started, although all middle-class, represent radically different positions on the social spectrum. Some of the positions on the social spectrum seem to be the result of deliberate choices. This research indicates that Mennonite missionaries, by consciously

choosing to identify around position A, can succeed in planting churches of position A people, a church which has the potential of attracting both the Marginalized and the Establishment individuals, raising the hopes of the Marginalized and prophetically impacting the Establishment end of society.

If it is true that missionaries can make incarnational choices, how can this be done?

### *Implementing the incarnational approach*

Instead of coming to a new field with clear goals and a strategy to reach them, Mennonite missionaries could come with a clear commitment to identify with the people most likely to receive the message of the gospel, and who can then themselves represent the gospel with authenticity which impacts all society. This begins by the missionary forming organic personal relationships naturally and primarily to people within social grouping A, both Christian and non-Christian.

Two things are needed to ensure that this occurs: missionaries who are committed to identify with their new society from within social grouping A, and a policy by the mission board which gives these missionaries the freedom, time, and support needed for the task.

Identification with social grouping A involves listening and relating from the outset to those in the new society who could be labeled "integrated critics." This refers to those who are integrated socially into the mainstream of society and at the same time are aware of, and concerned by, the needs and shortcomings within it to the extent that they actively seek, promote, and engage in alternatives to the status quo. The integrated critic is not only already aware of his society and its shortcomings, he is aware of the possibilities for change. To be negatively critical about society as a newly arrived missionary, or a marginalized person, although common, is hardly helpful. The integrated critic, as a full participant in society involved in working for change, can help the missionary understand not only the problems within that society but current responses to those problems and the motivating hopes of the activists.

There are several practical ways for implementing the incarnational approach to mission:

As integration into social position A within society is the missionary's first priority, a part-time voluntary position with a Christian or secular organization located within that position could be an immediate goal. This allows the

missionary to begin contributing immediately to the new society and to be seen as legitimate by all. This puts the missionary in touch with relationship networks within both the Christian and secular communities. It gives the freedom to explore needs and possible Christian responses with others who are organically integrated into society.

The missionary as an individual, and the fellowship as it begins to form, should join the indigenous Christian and secular networks and movements which share common vision and do so with a clear identity as Christians in general and Mennonites in particular. Both the joining and the identity are important. Mennonites, with a tradition which began in social position A and which has been more or less maintained ever since, can, by joining hands with others, contribute to and enrich those expressions of faithfulness in the new society wherever they occur. These relationships can make possible a prophetic challenge to both church and society without being in competition with indigenous expressions of faithfulness as imported denominational programs, starting with the strategic approach, may tend to be.

The goal, in relating to and becoming identified with these networks and movements as Mennonite missionaries, is to participate in a "people movement of the Spirit" or contribute to the possibility of one, rather than in denominational church planting. This is not to say that denominational establishment and growth can be or should be avoided. On the contrary Mennonites will

flourish as part of a "people movement of the Spirit"—as will Baptists, Catholics, Anglicans, and Pentecostals. The point is that the concept of church planting and church growth, built on strategic presuppositions, seems to carry with it some intrinsic competitive notions which may work very well in bringing people into a particular congregation but may not contribute to the long-range effect of the gospel in modern, affluent societies.

#### *The challenge of the incarnation*

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Is the Mennonite Church in modern, affluent societies like Jesus in the world? Are Mennonite missionaries in these societies taking the unique opportunity of beginning like Jesus in these new areas? The challenge is to respond to the call of Jesus, in spite of the difficulty and cost, to join him where he is in the world.

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## Perspective on Mission from Matthew's Gospel

EARL ZIMMERMAN

The past century of mission activity has been both exciting and challenging for the church. It has pushed us into new understandings both of ourselves as Christians and of the world in which we serve. It has brought new life into many Christian groups which had become trapped in ethnic and social ghettos. It has pushed the church out of its Western cultural enclave and has created, perhaps for the first time, a truly cross-cultural and international Christian fellowship.

This century of missionary encounter with the vast mosaic of human cultures, social systems, ideologies, and religions has also made us less sure of our mission. To the extent that this has been a correction of our cultural triumphalism and naïveté, it has been healthy. One suspects, however, that part of our uncertainty is also due to fatigue and a loss of vision.

Authentic mission by its very nature entails vulnerability and risk. To open oneself and one's truth claims, in dialogue or in debate, to the many competing truth claims in our world can be overwhelming. It is in this encounter that we often become aware of how parochial our faith understanding is. Our involvement in mission demon-

strates to us how much our Christian faith is expressed in terms dictated by our culture. It reveals our compliance with Western colonial and imperial powers. It also places us at the forefront of the clash between modern and traditional worldviews. In this context it becomes imperative to reexamine our rationale for Christian mission and, indeed, our understanding of Christian faith.

Contemporary evangelical understandings of "mission" are often informed by a rational understanding of Christian faith, on the one hand, or by Pietism, on the other. Both Protestants and Catholics have scholastic traditions that emphasize rational, deductive schemes of understanding the Christian faith.

I recently visited a team of evangelical missionaries who witness to Muslims in a slum area in Manila. They have a reading center where they carry on lively public debates which often draw sizable crowds. Their innovative approaches to Islam, however, appear to be limited to methods of rationally explaining Christianity to Muslims.

A Filipino friend who accompanied me on that visit insightfully commented, "How can you win them if your first order of business is to challenge their religion in public? All you will gain is their animosity." A serious limitation was their predominantly methodological, rational, and verbal approach to evangelism. The team agreed that an authentic local community of faith had to emerge

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to significantly touch the lives of people living in that Manila slum.

This is not to deprecate the contribution of the scholastic tradition but rather to recognize its limitations. A basic weakness is its failure to account for the cultural constraints on human understanding and systems of thought. This is a primary issue behind the debate on biblical authority in some church circles.

Pietism is making a new impact on the church as evidenced by the rapidly growing Pentecostal and charismatic movements. Its experiential, emotional content meets the needs of many people seeking meaning and purpose in our rapidly changing technological world. Surely the experiential and emotional are important components of Christian faith. One must ask, however, if we are witnessing a retreat into a private world of religious experience that refuses to seriously engage the larger world both intellectually and morally.

Where do we turn for answers to our questions about the mission of the church in the late twentieth century? As in every age, we return to the biblical texts with the questions that our involvement in the world has brought to us. We need to use all the tools available to us to understand the texts and the biblical theology behind them. The next step is to hermeneutically reflect on the biblical message, asking how we can be faithful to it in our situation. We must also listen carefully to the voices of generations of Christians that have preceded us.

Finally, however, just as the context which shapes the questions of every generation is unique, so also the answers we give to those questions must be authentically our own. Our theological answers are tentative. We must be open to new insights as we study God's Word and are led by God's Spirit in the task of mission.

### **Mission in Matthew's Gospel**

The author of Matthew's Gospel writes for a church in crisis. On one hand, the Matthaean community faces opposition from a resurgent Pharisaism following the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of Titus and the Romans (A.D. 67-70). After the Jewish defeat and the destruction of the temple by the Romans, rabbinical Pharisaism asserted itself as the normative interpreter of Judaism. The relative tolerance which Christians had experienced as a messianic sect within Judaism was no longer assured. Christians were being excommunicated from the synagogue. They were vying with rabbinical Pharisaism about who would be the definitive interpreter of Jewish tradition.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the success of the Matthaean community's mission to the Gentiles was causing tensions within the church and made it difficult to dialogue with Judaism (Guelich 1983:26). The church was being drawn into uncharted waters. What did it mean to be faithful to the Jewish religious tradition as interpreted by the Christ event? Would the influx of Gentiles loose the Matthaean community from its spiritual moorings? What would the shape of continuity be and where would it be found within a context of radical change and discontinuity?

The Gospel of Matthew is written as a response to this challenge. The response is essentially Christological.<sup>2</sup> It is the affirmation that Jesus is Messiah; he is Immanuel—"God with us" (Matt. 1:23). It is Jesus Messiah who fulfills the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). He has come proclaiming the eschatological kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:17), calling persons to leave all and follow him (Matt. 4:19).

The response also has a strong ecclesiological dimension (Senior 1983:67ff.). Jesus Messiah has created a new "kingdom" community in the midst of the old communities. This eschatological community is empowered through the resurrection presence and authority of Jesus Messiah (Matt. 28:18-20). It is a definitively different, alternative community. Kingdom persons are meek and poor in spirit, they mourn, they seek justice, they are merciful, they are pure in heart, they are peacemakers, and they are persecuted by the old communities (Matt. 5:3-12).

The ecclesiological response includes a missiological impulse. The community of Jesus Messiah has a universal mandate to make disciples of all peoples (Matt. 28:18-20). In its very essence it is a missionary community. It is a city situated on a hill which cannot be hidden (Matt. 5:14). As an embodied expression of the "kingdom" it is a witness to the world. The practical consequence, the deeds, or—to borrow a term from sociology—the "praxis" of this community makes it a witness (Matt. 5:16). It cannot be other.

Matthew's objectives are both apologetic and didactic. He presents his community as the true Israel of God. This community is the definitive interpreter of the Old Testament Scriptures and the Jewish tradition over against rabbinical Pharisaism. He also seeks to ground his large and mixed community, containing both Jews and a large influx of Gentiles, in the faith tradition of Israel. This tradition is interpreted through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Finally, he centers the universal mission impulse of his community in its faith in Jesus. To be faithful to the Spirit of Jesus means to be a city on a hill and to go into all the world. The mission to the Gentiles must go forward.

Matthew's understanding of mission grows out of his archetypal vision of the Christian community as the eschatological people of God. This new community, centered in Jesus Messiah and in direct continuity with the prophetic vision of the people of God, is the locus where the "rule of God" is manifested in the world. As an alternative community its mission is an expression of its corporate life as a gathered people. It is this community that is a witness to the world, in both word and deed, that Jesus is the Messiah.

### **Hermeneutical reflections**

#### *The assertion of Christology*

The fundamental assertion of Matthew's Gospel is Christological. It is the claim that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one sent from God (Matt. 1:23; 3:17; 16:16). Matthew's understanding of salvation, of the new eschatological age, of the new people of God (*laos theou*), and of mission is all premised by this assertion. We who would profess to follow Jesus must understand the absolute radicalness of this claim.

A friend who works with a Christian service agency recently asked me, "How is what we are doing any different from the work of other nongovernmental organizations that seek to meet human need?" I think we would all admit that on the surface there is often very little discernible difference. Most Christian agencies, however, profess that they are serving in the name of Christ. What does that mean to us?

If our vision of the "kingdom of God" is limited to the abstract ideals of meeting "human need" and promoting that which is "life giving," can we honestly say we are serving in the name of Christ? I think not. Any humani-

tarian person could affirm the same vision. What, then, does it mean to serve in the name of Christ?

A Christian who is working at community organization among the slum dwellers in Bangkok told me that it was very difficult to find other Christians who were willing to participate in such work. Most of the people who work with him either have no faith commitment or are Buddhist. He shared, however, that the poor are not necessarily lovable. Persons who become involved in such work out of a sense of idealism rarely last long. According to him, it takes either a strong ideological commitment or a faith commitment to continue. He believes it is at this point that people begin to ask serious questions about faith.

The question we are grappling with is Christological. Matthew's Gospel proclaims that it is in Jesus that the eschatological "kingdom of God" has drawn near (Matt. 4:17). When we serve in the name of Christ we are inviting those we serve to follow the same Jesus who has called us. There is a scandal in this because by doing so we are making a truth claim that is in opposition to the many truth claims in the world.

#### *The assertion of the future reign of God*

A second assertion, which is closely tied to Matthew's Christology, is that the coming of Jesus was a pivotal point in world history. In Jesus the future reign of God—the eschaton—has broken into the present age (Matt. 4:12-17). Nevertheless, Jesus teaches us to continue to look forward to a future complete reign of God on earth and to pray in expectation, "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10).

The present age is an interim age of "already" and "not yet." We experience the good news of God's reign in Jesus and anticipate its fullness in the age to come. This inbreaking of the reign of God requires a radical decision from us. We must now choose between the reign of God brought near in Jesus and the reign of the world or the old age.

It is of primary importance that Christians themselves understand this message. Hans Küng states:

*If the Church wants to be a credible herald, witness, demonstrator and messenger in the service of the reign of God, then it must constantly repeat the message of Jesus not primarily to the world, to others, but to itself; the Church must accept in faith the message of the coming reign of God which has irrupted into the present, and constantly accept anew and in obedience the reign of God which is already present, God's gracious and demanding salvific will. Its credibility—and no amount of energetic and busy activity can replace that vital factor—depends totally on its remaining faithful to the message of Jesus (Küng 1976:136).*

The idea that the church's primary responsibility is to repeat the message of Jesus to itself may at first seem strange, if not completely wrong. However, our understanding of who Jesus is, as well as our understanding of who we are as the new "people of God," is central to the task of mission. If we do not grasp and live out this message our many words and activities will be of little consequence. Our Christian service needs to grow out of the assurance that Jesus is the Messiah and that through him we are the new people of God. As we serve with this confidence, persons will be challenged by the Spirit to also make a decision for God.

A fundamental question for Christians today is what

Matthew's understanding of the church as the eschatological people of God means for us. Matthew wrote from the conviction that in Jesus a new reality has broken into the world of human affairs. This new reality is the fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological vision of the gathered end-time people of God.

It is evident that Jesus drew his self-identity and the understanding of his divine mission from the literary world of the Old Testament. He especially identified with the Old Testament prophetic tradition. He based his call to ministry directly in that tradition (Luke 4:17-19). Matthew, plus all the New Testament writers, followed Jesus in this regard. For Matthew, the ministry of Jesus and, by extension, that of his community, was a fulfillment of the prophetic tradition.

In this regard a basic requirement for our hermeneutical task is an understanding of the church as a particular, gathered people of God in mission. It is this continuity as a people of God in mission from which all our hermeneutical and theological reflections must flow. A hermeneutic which is based on a universal concept of "social responsibility," on one hand, or on a pietistic privatized understanding of salvation, on the other, is not adequate. The problem with both is that they have lost the archetypal vision of what it means to be a people of God. From the perspective of social responsibility the kingdom has become synonymous with the world or certain moral and ethical ideals in society. From the perspective of a privatized spirituality the kingdom is only a hidden, internal experience. Both of these perspectives have lost their ability to offer a radical critique and a radical alternative to the world of human affairs. This is because they have no basis of discontinuity with the world from which to offer such a critique or alternative.

We must be careful, however, that we do not equate the church with the kingdom of God. While the church is the locus in which the rule of God is experienced in our world, the kingdom is not synonymous with the church. The kingdom must be understood as the full extent of God's will and activity. The church is not the kingdom but rather a foretaste of the kingdom.

Stanley Hauerwas writes:

*... it is in the church that the narrative of God is lived in a way that makes the kingdom visible. The church must be the clear manifestation of a people who have learned to be at peace with themselves, one another, the stranger, and of course, most of all, God. There can be no sanctification of individuals, without a sanctified people. We need examples and masters, and if we are without either, the church cannot exist as a people who are pledged to be different from the world (Hauerwas 1983:97).*

The particularity of the church's claim to be the people of God is scandalous to the modern mind. It seems to militate against the post-Enlightenment ideals of tolerance and universality. In one respect this critique is correct. By making an exclusive truth claim the church sets itself over against the rest of the world. This, however, is not the basic issue. The issue is, rather, how one relates the particularity of one's existence including one's truth claims to the rest of the world.

The Western post-Enlightenment world has yet to come to terms with the particularity of existence and of all truth claims. The belief that somehow one can arrive at a

universal and value-free understanding of reality simply does not hold up under the scrutiny of human experience. The cultural imperialism which often accompanies the secular ideal of universality gives ample evidence of this. We must recognize and own the particularity which is at the base of all human experience and knowledge before we can hope to transcend its limitations. In this respect what is needed is recognizing and repenting of the triumphalism and cultural imperialism that too often characterizes our human existence.

The position of the disciples in Matthew's Gospel was one of vulnerability. Their position in the larger Palestinian society was precarious and marginal. Their truth claim of being the people of God sprang from their relationship with Jesus and their understanding of the prophetic faith tradition which they claimed as their own. They identified themselves as "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3) and freely acknowledged their own doubts and failures (Matt. 26:56; 28:17). Matthew's community which existed on the margin between an often hostile Jewish world and a yet alien Gentile world could identify with the precariousness of the disciples' existence.

God's people today also stand in the dialectical tension between faith and doubt. We struggle with the intellectual questions that our world brings to us. We are well aware of our past failures, of how shallow and arrogant our relationships to other peoples have been. We are often painfully reminded of the lack of peace and a spirit of reconciliation within the church. We are tempted to misuse power and material things. We struggle with what it means to be vulnerable, to be a people that identifies with and reaches out to social outcasts and sinners. Living on the boundary is often uncomfortable and we crave recognition and acceptance from the larger society. At times we are unsure of our mission and of what it means to go and make disciples of all the peoples (Matt. 28:19).

We have, however, also experienced the inbreaking of God's kingdom in our own lives as well as in the world in

which we serve. We know the liberating freedom and peace of being God's people. We know the joy of finding answers to some of our deepest questions. We have experienced release from the sins that warp our lives. In the midst of pain and suffering we have found healing. We believe this is because of Jesus—because his life has touched ours. In him we have experienced something of the "reign of God" and of the "age to come." By faith we believe that he is with us and that all power and authority has been given to him. It is in this power and authority that we go forth (Matt. 28:20).

## Notes

1. The struggle between Matthew's community and rabbinical Pharisaism is widely acknowledged among scholars. On this point see Davis, *The Sermon on the Mount* (90ff.). See also Nickel, *The Synoptic Gospels* (115).
2. The fact that Matthew chose the literary medium of a gospel demonstrates his Christological emphasis. On this subject see especially Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*.

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## In Review

*Liberation Themes in Reformational Perspective.* By Samuel Escobar. Sioux Center, IA: Dordt Press, 1989, 63 pp., \$2.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Wilbert R. Shenk

This booklet contains seven lectures delivered at Dordt College in commemoration of the Protestant Reformation. Samuel Escobar is well known as a Latin-American evangelical missiologist and leader in the InterVarsity movement. He is now professor of missiology and Latin American Studies at Eastern Baptist Seminary in Philadelphia.

Escobar treats the following themes: the Reformation and the Word of God; a dual movement within 19th-century Protestantism; reading the Bible with new eyes; the vision from the underside; theology as reflection on praxis; liberation themes in reformational perspective: history; and liberation themes in reformational perspective: theology. Escobar covers considerable ground in brief compass. The lectures serve as an introduction to themes important to Christians in Latin America today. He holds together the evangelical emphasis on the authority of Scripture and a commitment to radical discipleship. He treats sympathetically but critically liberation theology.

Escobar is a skilled communicator. At times he speaks almost epigrammatically as when he says: "The life of the Church is the ground of every authentic theology. The Church in mission is the source of the new questions to God's Word that are at the very beginning of theology." One hopes we will continue to receive from Samuel Escobar the fruits of his convictions, scholarship, and broad experience as a world Christian.

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Wilbert R. Shenk currently represents Mennonite Board of Missions as Mennonite missiologist in the Gospel and Our Culture project in Birmingham, England.

*Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scriptures in World Religions.* By Harold Coward. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988, 222 pp., \$11.95 (pb), \$24.95 (hb)

Reviewed by C. Norman Kraus

Professor Coward of the University of Calgary will be recognized by many as the author of *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (Orbis, 1985). In both volumes he first surveys the positions of five major religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—then adds a chapter assessing possible future developments in interreligious dialogue and points out a direction he feels is feasible. In *Sacred Word and Sacred Text* he adds the writings of Sikhism to the five religions surveyed.

This second book describes the similarities and differences in the Scriptures of different religious traditions and how these traditions have developed internally. Coward emphasizes the way in which scriptures are used and points out the significant differences between the oral and written traditions in each religion. His purpose in making this comparison is to provide a basis for interreligious dialogue. He pointed out in *Pluralism* that each religion's ignorance of the others is one of the critical limitations to significant dialogue, and here he attempts to remedy this shortcoming.

In his final chapter Coward suggests that future use of Scripture in the Christian tradition should stress the oral (evocative) rather than the written (analytical). He argues that more attention should be given to hearing, memorizing, and reciting Scripture in personal devotion as well as public worship. Thus religious experience rather than scholarly theology would be enhanced.

Professor Coward's own position is that we be prepared to live with a pluralism of Scriptures (and religions) as means of evoking a saving experience of the transcendent mystery. He urges that the way ahead will be greatly facilitated by an empathetic understanding of the sacred Word that has come through other religions.

*Bible and Mission.* Edited by Wayne Stumme. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1986, 205 pp., \$10.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Ben Duerksen

*Bible and Mission* consists of fourteen essays addressing the relevance of the Bible to modern mission. The contributors are Lutheran rather than Anabaptist, as seen in statements like "being born anew," that birth from above, is accomplished only in Baptism."

The essays differ in style from the delightful, practical article by Barbara Jurgensen, to scholarly research which may be appreciated by scholars only.

The book makes a strong case for mission from the Old Testament, although it fails to address the pre-Jewish era. The New Testament studies, though helpful, become rather technical.

While not using the term "holistic," the book warns against dichotomizing between evangelism and social concerns. It also warns against spiritualizing passages dealing with poverty and oppression. The thrust of the book is summed up well in the statement: "General consensus of mission thinking is that God's concern for all people finds special expression in God's concern for the poor and oppressed people, and that a special concern of the church in mission must be to take sides . . . with the poor" (p. 101).

Although some readers might prefer a stronger emphasis on evangelism, the book provides excellent practical ideas for reaching international students, ethnic minorities, as well as urban "down-and-outers."

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## EDITORIAL

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The year 1989 proved to be extraordinary. It is certain to stand out in the history books of the future as one of the pivotal moments when the world system underwent a basic restructuring. Astute observers had been saying for some time that the socialist system of government based on Marxist ideology was in deep difficulty, but the speed of its undoing was nothing short of startling.

Since the Russian revolution of October 1917 brought communism to power, a series of ideological systems have taken charge of one country after another. These ideologies have demonstrated remarkable strength of purpose, but they have only been able to maintain themselves in power by resorting to police-state tactics against their own citizens. Like any other system of power over time these ruling elites have become corrupt and alienated the masses. Virtually all of them have been officially hostile to religion or, as in the case of Nazism, co-opted religion for its cause.

Twenty-five years ago it appeared we were witnessing the triumph of ideology. Today one is tempted to think that ideology is hoist with its own petard.

Recently I read a feature story on Gian Carlo Menotti, who composed the opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors" for broadcast on television in 1951. It has become a standard feature of the Christmas season in North America. The interviewer asked Menotti how he explained the opera's continuing appeal both to children and adults. Menotti pointed to several reasons. "In all my operas," he said, "I've tried to delve into the creative power of faith." He insists that faith is more creative than disbelief. Menotti then revealed why this faith dimension is so important to him personally. As a child he himself was lame. At three years of age his nurse, a devout woman, took him to a religious shrine and he experienced miraculous healing. He has walked normally ever since. Thus at a crucial point in "Amahl" the story becomes autobiographical for Menotti. Amahl's vicarious encounter with the Christ-child world reenacts Menotti's meeting with the Christ-child through his faithful nurse. This is

Menotti's witness to the power of faith.

Ideology has been a strong competitor of faith in the twentieth century because it promised a new world order without dependence on the transcendent. The Christian faith insists that only through the intervention of God can the cycle of sin and all its distortions be remedied. The Christian witness is that by faith we are promised a new heaven and a new earth, not by denying this world or attempting to escape from it, but by entrusting ourselves to God who alone can redeem.

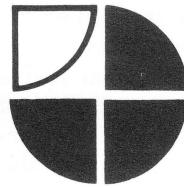
Guy F. Hershberger died at age 93 on December 29, 1989. In 1971 he preached a sermon, "Our Citizenship Is in Heaven" (published in *Kingdom, Cross and Community*, 1976) in which he identified six things "the heavenly citizen does to hold the world together." It is clear that for Hershberger "heaven" is directly concerned with the world, but it is a relationship of creative tension, not easy acquiescence.

First, the heavenly citizen is obedient to the great commission. Hershberger noted that the great commission proclaims "the lordship of Christ over the church, over the angelic powers, and over their visible agents, the rulers of states and heads of governments." Second, the heavenly citizen proclaims the lordship of Christ over the principalities and powers. In the third place, asserted Hershberger, the heavenly citizen does not have a place within the power structure of these principalities and authorities. Fourth, this is not a call for escape but rather martyr witness to the power of the Lamb in the face of hostile and destructive forces.

Hershberger's fifth guideline is that Christian mission demands a full and balanced response—personal transformation and social response—to the whole of human need. Finally, the heavenly citizen has a "keen sense of destiny" and lives in hope in a world that can find no hope through its ideologies and systems. This hopefulness is vital to the witness to the gospel.

—Wilbert R. Shenk

# MISSION FOCUS



## Conversion and Christian Continuity

A. F. WALLS

### The six ages of Christianity

From Pentecost to the twentieth century, Christian history may be divided into six phases. Each phase sees its embodiment in a major culture area, which means that in that phase Christianity took an impress from the culture of that area. In each phase the expression of the Christian faith developed features which could only have originated in that culture and within that phase.

For one brief, vital period, Christianity was entirely Jewish. First generation Christians were all Jews—diverse, perhaps, in background and outlook, Hebraist and Hellenist, conservative and liberal—but without the slightest idea that they had “changed their religion” by recognizing Jesus as Messiah. It remains one of the marvels of the ages that Christianity entered its second phase at all. But those unnamed “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” introduced some Greek-speaking pagans in Antioch to the Jewish national savior (Acts 11:20), and those law-righteous apostles and elders at Jerusalem agreed that they might enter Israel without becoming Jews (Acts 15:1-29). The result was that Christianity became Hellenistic-Roman; the Messiah, Savior of Israel, was recognized to be also the Lord, Savior of souls. It happened just in time, for soon afterwards the Jewish state disappeared in the early holocausts of A.D. 70 and A.D. 135. Only the timely diffusion of faith in Jesus across cultural lines gave that faith any continuing place in the world. Without its diffusion at that time, its principal representatives would have been the Ebionites and similar groups who by the third and fourth centuries lay on the very fringe of the Christian movement, even if they could claim to be the enduring legacy of James the Just and the Jerusalem elders.

In the process of transmission, the expression of that faith changed beyond what many an outsider might recognize. To see the extent of the change one has only to look at the utterances of early Jewish Christians as reflected in the New Testament, utterances which indicate their priorities, the matters most on their hearts. “We had hoped that he would be the one . . . to set Israel free,” says the disillusioned disciple on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:21, TEV). On the mount of ascension, the preoccupation is the same. Realizing that they stand at

the threshold of a new era, the disciples ask, “Lord, will you at this time give the kingdom back to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Statements and questions like these could be uttered only by Jews, out of centuries of present suffering and hope deferred. They have no meaning for those who belong to the nations, whether in the first or the twentieth century. Each comes to Jesus with quite different priorities, and those priorities shape the questions they ask, even about salvation. A first-century Levantine Gentile would never have brought to Jesus as a matter of urgency the question of the political destiny of Israel, though he might have asked about the destiny of the soul.

Those Christian Jews in Antioch who realized that Jesus had something to say to their pagan friends took an immense risk. They were prepared to drop the time-honored word “Messiah,” knowing that it would mean little to their neighbors and perhaps mislead them—what concern was the redeemer of Israel, should they grasp the concept, to them? They were prepared to see the title of their national savior, the fulfillment of the dearest hopes of their people, become attached to the name of Jesus as though it was a sort of surname. They took up the ambiguous and easily misunderstood word “Lord” (Acts 11:20; cf. Acts 9:22, which relates to a Jewish audience). They could not have foreseen where their action would lead, and it would be surprising if someone did not warn them about the disturbing possibilities of confusion and syncretism. But it transformed Christianity.

### The second age of Christianity

The second of the six phases of Christianity was Hellenistic-Roman. This is not to say that within that age Christianity was geographically confined to the area where Hellenistic-Roman culture was dominant. Important Christian communities lay, for instance, in Central Asia, East Africa, and South India. But the dominant expression of the Christian faith for several centuries resulted from its steady penetration of Hellenistic thought and culture during a period when that culture was also associated with a single political entity, the Roman Empire.

The second phase has, like the first, left its mark on all later Christianity. Of the new religious ideas which entered with the Christian penetration of Hellenistic culture, one of the most pervasive for the future was that of orthodoxy, a canon of right belief, capable of being stated in a series of propositions arrived at by a process of logical argument. Such a feature was not likely to mark Christianity in its Jewish period; Jewish identity has always been

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concerned either with what a person *is* or with what he *does* rather than with what he *believes*. But when Christian faith began to penetrate the Hellenistic-Roman world, it encountered a total system of thought, a system to which it was in some respects antipathetic, but which, once encountered, had to be permeated. The system had a certain built-in arrogance, a feature it has never quite lost despite the mutations through which the Hellenistic-Roman legacy has gone in its transmission over the centuries to other peoples, and despite the penetration effected by Christian faith. Basically it maintained that there is one desirable pattern of life, a single "civilization" in effect, one model of society, one body of law, one universe of ideas. Accordingly, there are in essence two types of humanity: people who share that pattern and those ideas, and people who do not. There are Greeks—a cultural, not an ethnic, term—and there are barbarians. There are civilized people who share a common heritage, and there are savages, who do not.

In many ways the Jews and their religion already represented a challenge to this assumption. Whatever degree of assimilation to it many Jews might reflect, the stubborn fact of Jewish identity put them in a different category from the rest of the Hellenistic-Roman universe. Alone in that universe they had an alternative literature, a written tradition, of comparable antiquity. And they had their own dual classification of mankind: Israel—the nation—and the nations. Hellenistic-Roman Christians had no option but to maintain, and to seek to reconcile, aspects of both their inheritances.

The total Hellenistic-Roman system of thought had to be penetrated and Christianized by the gospel. This meant the endeavor to bring the intellectual tradition into captivity to Christ and to use it for new purposes; it also meant putting the traditions of codification and of organization to the service of the gospel. The result was orthodoxy, a logically expounded belief set in codified form, established through a process of consultation and maintained through effective organization. Hellenistic-Roman civilization offered a total system of thought and expected general conformity to its norms. The Christian penetration of the system inevitably left it a total system.

### The third age—barbarian Christianity

Hellenistic-Roman civilization lived for centuries in the shadow of fear; fear of the day when the center could not hold, when things fell apart, when the over-extended frontiers collapsed and the barbarian hordes poured in. Christians fully shared these fears. Tertullian, who lived in the age of persecution, though he would not countenance Christians in the army—Christ has unbelted every soldier, he says—prayed for the preservation of the empire; for when the frontiers collapsed, the great tribulation would begin. For people living under the Christian empire the triumph of the barbarians would be equated with the end of Christian civilization.

Two great events brought about the end of Hellenistic-Roman Christianity. One had been widely predicted—the collapse of the Western Roman Empire before the barbarians. The other no one could have predicted—the emergence of the Arabs as a world power and their occupation of the Eastern provinces where the oldest and strongest Christian churches lay. The combination of these forces led to the end of the Hellenistic-Roman phase of Christianity. That it did not lead to the slow strangula-

tion of the total Christian presence in the world was due to the slow, painful, and far from satisfactory spread of Christian allegiance among the tribal peoples beyond the old frontiers, the people known as barbarians, the destroyers of Christian civilization. What, in fact, happened was the development of a third phase of Christianity, what we may call a barbarian phase. Once again, it was just in time: centuries of erosion and attrition faced the peoples of Christianity's Hellenistic heartlands. Once again, Christianity had been saved by its cross-cultural diffusion.

The culture gap to be bridged was quite as great as that between Jew and Greek, yet the former faith of classical civilization became the religion of peasant cultivators. The process was marked by the more or less ready acceptance by new Christians of a great deal of the cultural inheritance belonging to the classical civilization from which they derived their Christianity. Further, when they substituted the God of the Bible for their traditional pantheons, the language and ideas had passed through a Greek-Roman filter before it reached them. The signifi-

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**MISSION FOCUS** (ISSN 0164-4696) is published quarterly at 500 S. Main St., Elkhart, Indiana, by Mennonite Board of Missions.

Single copies available without charge. Send correspondence to Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370. Second-class postage paid at Elkhart, Indiana, and at additional mailing offices. Lithographed in USA. Copyright 1990 by Mennonite Board of Missions.

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cance of this we must consider later.

Nevertheless, the barbarian phase was emphatically not a simple extension of the Christianity of the patristic age; it was a new creation, conditioned less by city-based literary, intellectual, and technological tradition than by the circumstances of peasant cultivators and their harsh, uncertain lives. If the barbarians took their ideas from the Hellenistic Christian world, they took their attitudes from the primal world; and both ideas and attitudes are components in the complex which makes up a people's religion. As with their predecessors, they appropriated the Christian faith for themselves, and reformulated it with effects which continued amid their successors after their own phase had passed away. If the second phase of Christianity invented the idea of orthodoxy, the third invented the idea of the Christian nation. Christian Roman emperors might establish the church, might punish heretics, might make laws claiming allegiance to Christ, might claim to represent Christ, but tribal peoples knew a far stronger law than any emperor could enforce—that of custom. Custom is binding upon every child born into a primal community; nonconformity to that custom is simply unthinkable. A communal decision to adopt the Christian faith might take some time in coming; there might be uncertainty, division, and debate, but once thoroughly made, the decision would bind everyone in that society. A community must have a single custom. It was not necessarily a case of strong rulers enforcing their own choice. In Iceland, which was a democracy with no central ruler, the Assembly was divided down the middle between Christians and non-Christians. When the decision for Christianity was eventually made, the non-Christians felt bitter and betrayed, but no one suggested a division into communities with different religions. Religion, in fact, is but one aspect of the custom which binds a society together. There can be only one church in a community. And so barbarian Christianity brings to fruition the idea of the Christian nation.

Once the idea of the Christian nation was established, a new hermeneutic habit easily developed; the parallel between the Christian nation and Israel. Once nation and church are coterminous in scope, the experiences of the nation can be interpreted in terms of the history of Israel. In Western Christianity, this habit has long outlived the historical circumstances which gave it birth and has continued into the age of pluralism and secularization.

#### **The fourth and fifth ages of Christianity**

The fourth cultural phase of Christianity was a natural development of the third. Interaction between Christian faith and practice in its Hellenistic-Roman form and the culture of the northern peoples produced a remarkably coherent system across Western and Central Europe. When the Eastern Roman Empire, which effectively prolonged the Hellenistic phase of Christianity for several centuries in one area of the world, finally collapsed before the Muslims, this new hybrid Western form of Christianity became the dominant representation of Christianity. In the sixteenth century this Western formulation was to undergo radical revision through the movements of Reformation. The Protestant version of this was particularly radical, not least—through its emphasis on vernacular Scriptures—in stressing the local encounter of man with the Word of God. Reforming Catholicism, on the other hand, stressed the universal nature of the church, but

unconsciously established its universality on the basis of features which belonged essentially to Western intellectual and social history—and largely to a particular period of it. Both forms, however, belonged unmistakably to Western Europe; their very differences marked a growing cultural divergence between the north and south of the area.

One major development that took place within the West over those centuries set a challenge to Christian faith as hitherto received in Europe and required its reformulation. As we have seen, a necessary feature of barbarian Christianity was communal decision and mass response. But Western thought developed a particular consciousness of the individual as a monad, independent of kin-related identity. Christianity in its Western form adapted to this developing consciousness, until the concept of Christian faith as a matter of individual decision and individual application became one of the hallmarks of Western Christianity.

This Western phase of Christianity developed into another, with which it should probably be taken: the age of expanding Europe. The population of Europe was exported to other continents and the dominance of Europe extended, until by the twentieth century people of European origin occupied, possessed, or dominated the greater part of the globe. During this vital period, Christianity was the professed and, to a considerable extent, the active religion of almost all the European peoples.

Seen in the context of Christian history as a whole, this period saw two remarkable developments. One was a substantial recession of European peoples from the Christian faith. Its significance was not at first manifest because it was not regular and steady. Beginning in the sixteenth century, it had reached notable proportions by the eighteenth, when it appeared as if Christianity might still claim the masses of Europe but was losing the intellectuals. In the eighteenth century, however, and for much of the nineteenth, there was a Christian counterattack, which halted the movement of recession in Europe and brought spectacular accessions in the new towns of North America. The sudden quickening of the recession, therefore, in the twentieth century took observers by surprise—though predictions of its extent had been generally accepted a couple of centuries earlier. Only in the twentieth century did it become clear that the great towns, which were the source and the sign of Europe's dominance, had never really been evangelized at all.

The other major development of the period was the cross-cultural transplantation of Christianity, with varying degrees of success, to multitudes of people outside Europe. It did not look overwhelming by 1920; the high hopes, once entertained, of the evangelization of the world in one generation had by that time drained away into the trenches of the First World War. But we can see now that it was enough. The seeds of Christian faith had been planted in the Southern continents; before long these seeds were fruiting abundantly. All the world empires, except the Russian, have now passed away; the European hegemony of the world is broken; the recession of Christianity among the European peoples appears to be continuing. And yet we seem to stand at the threshold of a new age of Christianity, one in which its main base will be in the Southern continents, and where its dominant expression will be filtered through the culture of those continents. Once again, Christianity has been saved for the world by its diffusion across cultural lines.

## Christian expansion and the sixth age of Christianity

Let us pause here to consider the peculiar history of Christianity, as compared with other faiths. Hindus say with some justice that they represent the world's earliest faith, for many things in Indian religion are the same now as they were before Israel came out of Egypt. Yet over all those centuries, the geographical and cultural center has been the same. Invaders like the Aryans have come and made their mark; great innovative movements like that of the Buddha have come, flourished awhile, and then passed on elsewhere. The Christians and the Muslims with their claims to universal allegiance have come and made their converts. But still the same faith remains in the same place, absorbing all sorts of influences from without, not being itself absorbed by any.

By contrast, Iranian religion has been vital enough to have a molding effect at certain crucial times on Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in succession; and yet, as a separate, identifiable phenomenon in the world, its presence today is tiny. Christianity, on the other hand, has throughout its history spread outwards, across cultural frontiers, so that each new point on the Christian circumference is a new potential Christian center. And the very survival of Christianity as a separate faith has evidently been linked to the process of cross-cultural transmission. Indeed, with hindsight, we can see that on several occasions this transmission took place just in time; that without it, the Christian faith must surely have withered away. Nor has its progress been steadily outward, as Muslims may claim of their faith. Its progress has been serial, with a principal presence in different parts of the world at different times.

Each phase of Christian history has seen a transformation of Christianity as it has entered and penetrated another culture. There is no such thing as "Christian culture" or "Christian civilization" in the sense that there is an Islamic culture and an Islamic civilization. There have been several different Christian civilizations already; there may yet be many more. The reason for this lies in the infinite translatability of the Christian faith. Islam, the only other faith hitherto to make a comparable impact in such global terms, can produce a simple, recognizable culture—recognizable despite local assimilations and variations—across its huge geographical spread. This surely has something to do with the ultimate untranslatability of its charter document, the Koran. The Christian Scriptures, by contrast, are open to translation; nay, the great act on which Christian faith rests, the Word becoming flesh and pitching tent among us, is itself an act of translation. And this principle brings Christ to the heart of each culture, to the points of reference within it by which men know themselves. That is why each phase of Christian history has produced new themes; themes which the points of reference of that culture have made inescapable for those who share that framework. The same themes may lie beyond the conception of Christians of an earlier or another framework of thought. They will have their own commanding heights to be conquered by Christ.

## Diversity and coherence in historic Christianity

If we were to take samples of *representative* Christians from every century from the first to the twentieth, moving from place to place as will be necessary if our choice is to be representative, would they have anything in common? Certainly such a collection of people would often have

quite different priorities in the expression of the faith. And it is not only that the priorities are different; what appears of utmost importance to one group may appear intolerable, even blasphemous, to another. Even were we to take only those acknowledged as forming the tradition of Christianity represented by Western Evangelicals—how does the expression of faith compare among temple-worshipping Jew, Greek Council father, Celtic monk, German Reformer, English Puritan, Victorian churchman? How defective would each think the other on matters vital to religion?

And yet I believe we can discern a firm coherence underlying all these and, indeed, the whole of historic Christianity. It is not easy to state this coherence in propositional, still less in credal form—for extended credal formulation is itself a necessary product of a particular Christian culture. But a small body of convictions and responses express themselves when Christians of any culture express their faith. These may perhaps be stated thus:

1. *The worship of the God of Israel.* This not only defines the nature of God; the One, the Creator and the Judge, the One who does right and before whom man falls down; it makes the historical particularity of Christian faith. And it links the Christian—usually a Gentile—with the history of a people quite different from his own. It gives him a point of reference outside himself and his society.

2. *The ultimate significance of Jesus of Nazareth.* This is perhaps the test which above all marks off historic Christianity from the various movements along its fringes, as well as from other world faiths which accord recognition to the Christ. Once again, it would be pointless to try to encapsulate this ultimacy forever in any one credal formula. Any such formula will be superseded; or, even if adopted for traditional reasons, it may make no impression on believers who do not have the conceptual vocabulary the formula will imply. Each culture has its ultimate; and Christ is the ultimate in everyone's vocabulary.

3. *That God is active where believers are.*

4. *That believers constitute a people of God transcending time and space.*

These convictions appear to underlie the whole Christian tradition across the centuries, in all its diversity. Some of the very diversity of Christian expression has itself arisen from the need to set forth these responses in terms of the believers' framework of thought and perception of the world. To them we should perhaps add a small body of institutions which have continued from century to century. The most obvious of these have been the reading of a common body of Scriptures and the special use of bread and wine and water.

## Southern culture and the Christian future

Once more the Christian faith is penetrating new cultures—those of Africa and the Pacific and parts of Asia. (The Latin American situation is too complex for us to consider its peculiar significance here.) The present indications are that these Southern expressions of Christianity are becoming the dominant forms of the faith.

This is likely to mean the appearance of new themes and priorities undreamed of by ourselves or by earlier Christian ages; for it is the mark of Christian faith that it must bring Christ to the big issues closest to men's hearts. It does so through the structures by which people perceive and recognize their world; these are not universally the same. Affirmations which have been keynotes for Chris-

tians of former ages—or for ourselves—often represent the application of the Word about Christ to some great issue of assumption within the culture of time. For Christians of another time and place, with different cultural issues and assumptions, the notes may sound faint or strange. But there will certainly be themes and assumptions within their cultures which await the Word about Christ; and as the word is applied, new Christian keynotes may be heard. Southern Christianity may not possess those points of reference which made orthodoxy, for instance, or the Christian nation, or the primacy of individual decision, absolutely crucial to the capture by Christ of older worldviews. Pious early Jewish Christians would

have found their Greek successors strangely cold about Israel's most precious possession, the Law of God and its guide to living. Many of them would have been equally disturbed by the intellectual complexities into which Christological discussion was leading Greek Christians. In each case what was happening was the working out of Christian faith within accepted views of the world, so that those worldviews—as with the conversion of believers—are transformed, yet recognizable. Conversion is not simply a personal matter; when applied to attitudes and priorities, relationships, and ways of thinking, it takes generations.

## Sixteenth-Century Insights and Contemporary Reality: Reflections on Thirty-Five Years in Mission

ROBERT RAMSEYER

Three characteristics of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement have special relevance for Christians concerned about the mission of the church near the close of the twentieth century. These are:

1. A rejection of creeds and formal systematic theologizing in favor of reliance simply on the New Testament for guidance;
2. The recognition that all Christians are called to be disciples involved in the mission of sharing the gospel;
3. The understanding that the church exists for sharing the gospel.

### Theology

The Anabaptists had nothing that would pass for theology in most scholarly circles and their descendants have shown little interest in systematic theology. I can remember feeling somewhat inferior as a seminary student in the early 1950s because Mennonites did not seem to have written important works in theology. But is this really something to be embarrassed about? Does lack of interest in systematic theology necessarily imply lack of thoughtful reflection on the Christian faith and what it means to be a Christian?

In mission today, "contextualization" looms large. The process of contextualization involves going back to the starting point, and for the Anabaptists the starting point was Jesus Christ as he is seen in the Scriptures. The Anabaptists took the Scriptures as their guide and looked there for contemporary guidance. They were contextualizing, looking for guidance for living as Christian disciples in their contemporary setting. Christians contextualize in order to be able to live as Christians where they are. This is also what theology ought to be all about. That

is, the real purpose of theology is not to provide a comprehensive system for answering all possible questions about God, but rather to provide a map for Christian living. If theology is a map, obviously it needs to be redone for every time and place, for each situation. Moreover, a map need not include everything but only those things which people need to know in order to find their way.

Theology as a map has basically two purposes: (1) The church needs maps to help it share the good news about Jesus Christ with people who do not yet know him. It needs maps to guide that sharing so that people can see that the good news really is good news for them. These maps have to respond to people who are not yet consciously following Jesus Christ, respond to them in the real world in which they live. (2) Maps are also important to help us live as Jesus' disciples and to enable the church to be the church in today's world. We need maps to guide us in our lives as individual disciples and to help the church see its role in society today, maps which are specifically focused on the concrete situations in which we live and work.

Map-type theology, contextualized theology, whether it be for sharing the good news with people who are not yet disciples or for guiding disciples in their daily lives, focuses on the actual situations in which people live. It follows then that, when the church goes out in mission, it is important not to go out with prepackaged theological statements, but to go out with the Bible and to sit down with Christians where they are to work out appropriate expressions of the Christian faith for that time and place. For this reason we can be grateful that the Anabaptists were not theologians in the traditional sense, theologians who tried to work out statements which would be valid for all times and places.

Obviously no one goes into mission with no preconceived ideas about the Christian faith and life. No one goes with "only the Bible." We go with understandings which reflect our own histories and situations. However, in mission we are called to consciously work at refocusing, to work on the development of new maps which can guide people in this new (to us) setting. In mission this work of

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refocusing begins when people sit down and read the New Testament together, asking what this means for people in their communities where they live. Obviously, the use of imported theological statements impedes that refocusing task.

No matter where they may be, Christians will always be pilgrims and strangers, never able to fully blend with the society around them. However, we need to be sure that we are strangers for the right reasons, strangers because we follow Jesus, not because we follow some theology imported from another time and place. Following an imported theology is like using a London map to find a house in Tokyo, or like using a sixteenth century map of Hiroshima to find a home there today. It simply will not work. Jesus is our guide, and theology is to help us follow him. It has no other reason for existence.

The Christian church in Japan is not at home in the society around it, and it should not be. However, we need to be sure that the strangeness of the church comes from following Jesus Christ and not from following a theology brought by missionaries. The church in Japan today is a church of strangers and pilgrims—strangers and pilgrims because it has studied the Bible and listened to the voice of Jesus from the midst of Japanese society. Where are the theological maps of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Japan today actually focused? Have Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Christians been free to refocus the theologies which the first missionaries brought from North America? Is our so-called Anabaptist theology actually only a twentieth-century systemization of sixteenth-century ideas and practices? Is our so-called evangelical theology focused on our situation today or is it still focused on nineteenth- and twentieth-century North America?

Our task today is to go back once again to the beginning, back to the good news about Jesus, and to ask what this means for the world in which we live today. Going back to the beginning does not mean ignoring two thousand years of Christian theologizing; there is a great deal that we can learn from that history. Rather, we are called to return to the beginning in the light of that history.

The issue for the church in Japan, and in the rest of the world, is whether we have the courage to do that or whether we will remain captives of theological maps prepared for other times and places. This will require courage, but without it the church's mission of gospel sharing cannot be carried out in Japan or anywhere else. It is this courage which is part of the legacy of those sixteenth-century Anabaptists.

## Disciples

When the Anabaptists shared the gospel, their objective was not gaining passive converts, but making active disciples of Jesus Christ, disciples who themselves would live to share the gospel with others. Those sixteenth-century Christians took Matthew 28:18-20 seriously, believing that this was what Jesus had called them to do. They believed that all Christians in all times and places are called to make disciples.

Today the term "disciple" is often misunderstood as meaning a special class of superior Christians. There are ordinary Christians and there are disciples. However, "disciple" simply means one who is learning, learning from a teacher to whom one is committed. Jesus' disciples are those who are committed to learning from him, people who want to live in his way. Disciples believe that the way

Jesus taught us to live is not an impossible ideal but a way that is both possible and desirable.

Discipleship often becomes confusingly involved in the traditional Protestant argument about faith and works. That is, when discipleship is stressed there are those who say, "You are trying to earn your salvation through good works." This reaction indicates a profound lack of understanding of what faith is. Unfortunately, many of those who think of themselves as spiritual descendants of the Anabaptists have been led into this misunderstanding. Faith is our link with God, our tie of conscious dependence on God. In faith we admit that Jesus Christ knows far better than we what is good for us and what is harmful. Discipleship, trying to walk in the way that Jesus showed and taught, is simply the result of the fact that we believe walking in the way Jesus showed and taught really is the best way for us to live. Faith is our tie to Jesus Christ, and the way that we live in discipleship is the concrete expression of that faith.

If we are disciples we share in the commission that Jesus gave to his disciples: As the Father sent me, so I send you (John 20:21). Our mission is the same as Jesus' mission, and he is our model for that mission. Jesus is also our model for how the gospel is to be shared. Jesus teaches us the ways, the methods, by which the good news is to be shared.

One of the most important issues in mission today is the issue of priorities. A great deal has been written about the relative priority of (1) evangelism; (2) helping people with physical needs; and (3) working for the freeing of the oppressed. Jesus, however, responded to the needs of the people in whose presence he ministered without setting arbitrary priorities. He helped people where they needed help without apparent reference to where this stood on a list of ultimate priorities. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that for Jesus, helping people where they needed help was always the number one priority. If we are Jesus' disciples, then he is our example in this as well.

Communication studies have shown that the way a message is communicated has a profound effect on how that message will be understood. In Jesus' case, as the incarnate Word of God, there was complete unity between the good news which was shared, the sharer of that good news, and the way that it was shared. This is the example toward which we strive. Jesus' way of sharing the gospel was no accident but the way demanded by the content of the good news itself. In sharing the good news, Jesus rejected all claims to what is usually called power in human society. He rejected social power, economic power, technological power, and the power that comes with education. Instead, he became a servant and built relationships of love from that position, relationships along with which the good news could be shared.

What about the church in Japan? Too often we early Mennonite and Brethren in Christ missionaries in Japan had the traditional Protestant understanding that disciples are a special class of extra-mature Christians and that discipleship is too much to ask of new Christians. First new Christians receive Jesus in their hearts and then, as they are taught more, they may become ready to become disciples. The result can be seen in the development and growth of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Japan. In the beginning many people confessed their faith in Jesus and joined the church. At the same time many new Christians left the church. They had joined an interesting new religion for a time but had not made a commitment to becoming lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

Even today many church members consider Jesus' way one religion among others, a way which gives comfort and encouragement to the individual, but they have never understood it as a radically transforming, lifelong commitment. In too many cases our evangelism has been based on a traditional Protestant, rather than an Anabaptist, understanding of the gospel. The present plateauing of growth in the church in Japan is a direct result.

Can we move from passive believers to disciples, aggressively engaged in mission? Once again this will take courage, and there will be those who leave the church in the process.

### **The church**

What about the church which exists for mission? The sixteenth-century Anabaptists tried to re-create in their century the church which they saw in the New Testament. Obviously there is no single model for the church in the New Testament. However, although there are several models, one thing is clear. The New Testament church was not simply one social organization among others. The church in the New Testament was more like family, community, a living, vital organism. The church really is the living, active body of Christ. In the midst of sixteenth-century European society, the Anabaptists recovered this vision of the church and worked at building a church bound together by love in which members really tried to help each other, a church in which all were brothers and sisters without hierarchical distinctions.

That church actively engaged in mission. It was organized for mission. A church which was not interested in sharing the good news would have been inconceivable to those first Anabaptists. The loving fellowship of the church was attractive to people outside the church and drew them in. The fellowship of the church was living testimony to the good news, the concrete expression of the gospel. For both the New Testament church and the Anabaptists, evangelism was never a matter of words only; the witness

of the gospel was a witness which could be seen and experienced. In the church the gospel was made concrete.

When Mennonite and Brethren in Christ missionaries first came to Japan they organized themselves as missions. Probably the principal reason was that missionaries had done this wherever they went around the world. This was, of course, an organization separate from the church which was planted. It was natural, then, that church and mission came to be seen as organizations with different purposes, and since this "mission" was an organization of missionaries its purpose was clearly mission. The purpose of the church then necessarily lay elsewhere.

In addition, since the church in Japan was perceived to be a religious organization, its position in the lives of Christians was limited to what was understood to be the religious dimension of life. This has meant that in the lives of many church members there are things more important than the church, and that in some cases when a problem arises in a member's life, the member has chosen to leave the church.

However, *in spite* of all the mistakes and misunderstandings and, in a very real sense, *because of* these mistakes and misunderstandings, there are living, active Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations in Japan today. There are dedicated, committed disciples of Jesus Christ in these congregations. God's love is apparent in the fellowship of these churches, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is concretely visible.

In Japan, as around the world, we are called to study the experience of the church, to learn from that experience, and to go forward in faith. The Anabaptist legacy lies in the faith and knowledge that no matter where we are, no matter how difficult our circumstances may be, it is possible to live as disciples of Jesus Christ carrying on his mission in the world.

Jesus' disciples can be found in Japan and around the world. The church which is his group of disciples is here. We can look forward in faith to the growth of his church.

## **Anabaptism and Ecclesiology in a Context of Plurality**

**STANLEY W. GREEN**

We live at a significant juncture in the history of the world—the final decade before the millennium. All around the world events occur at a dizzying pace, spurred, no doubt, by technological advancements. These changes, the technological advances, and the portentous significance of the advancing new millennium have given new impetus to the church's missionary calling. Strategies for reaching the lost and unchurched by A.D. 2000 multiply at a bewildering rate. Alongside other denominational plans, the Mennonite Church has its *Vision 95 goals* and the General Conference Mennonites have their *Kingdom Commitments*.

The massive migration of people to the cities, often across national, cultural, and ethnic boundaries, makes the city a mosaic of human diversity. We celebrate the *Stanley W. Green is pastor of Faith Mennonite Church, Vice-President of the Council of Anabaptists in Los Angeles, and a Ph.D. student at Fuller Theological Seminary.*

opportunity this presents for reaching people who live on our doorstep with the gospel. This same fortuitous circumstance, which we believe is providential in the purposes of God, also brings certain tensions. A chief tension is associated with our evangelistic concern to expand the church and our desire to be faithful to the church's reconciling character—which is no less evangelistic, even if not immediately apparent. It is important to affirm early on that the church has a mandate to grow.

Growth is vital for the health and well-being of the church. The earliest fruit of the Spirit's ministry in the church was evidenced by its phenomenal growth. The first historical records of the Christian church celebrate the rapid growth of the apostolic church. It seems important, even imperative, as faithful and responsible stewards that we identify the most effective means to reach the multitudes who are part of the great harvest still to be reaped, according to the desire of the Savior (Matt. 9:37-38).

In recent years, many of those who are enthusiastic about our evangelistic imperative and who try sincerely to be faithful to the church's commission to "disciple the nations" (Matt. 28:19) have espoused what is known as the "homogeneous unit" or "people group" approach. Though the intense debate regarding this approach has died down, there continues to be a quiet implementation of homogeneous groupings with tragic consequence for church and society.

To be sure, there are many positive and valuable features to this particular approach. It affirms the value of cultural distinctives. It posits that a convert should not be expected to renounce or alienate himself from his cultural heritage. It asserts correctly that to ignore a people's language, culture, traditions, and identity as if these were valueless or nonexistent is wrong. In the same vein it suggests that the gospel's progress is facilitated by moving along natural human lines. Unfortunately, the consequence of this approach is that churches tend to be comprised of a single ethnic, linguistic, cultural group. This should not be the case in the long run. In time the church must recognize that its true nature is to reflect the new reality of the kingdom where all natural and human barriers are demolished. This reality will come in time through the process of nurture. It is important not to place any obstacles in the way of persons coming to Christ in order to facilitate the numerical growth of the church.

While we as Anabaptists must be equally enthusiastic about the numerical growth of the church and our desire to be faithful to the calling entrusted to us, we need to affirm certain considerations which we feel are indispensable to the integrity of the church.

### **Pragmatism and methods**

For Anabaptists, pragmatism has never been an important part of our heritage. If it were, we would never have the legacy of martyrdom as witnessed to in the *Martyrs Mirror*. For Anabaptists the end has never justified the means. Scripture has always been the locus for our appeal to authority. It is here, in God's will as revealed in the authoritative Word, that we find our ultimate and only justification for the methods we use in reaching the world. Pragmatism suggests the usability of a particular strategy as long as, and especially if, it works well. The difficulty with this approach is that the church is often seen as an end in itself. Against that unwarranted perception, the Scripture witnesses that we are not called to preach the church but to announce the kingdom of God, a central motif and a pervasive preoccupation of Jesus' teaching and ministry. In fact, it is the first word from Jesus' lips according to the earliest Gospel (Mark 1:25).

### **The true nature of the church**

Anabaptist ecclesiology has always affirmed the church's identity as the kingdom community. Both in its task and in its place in God's cosmic design, the church is called to be a genuinely redeemed and redeeming community. As a discipled community the church is committed to a pattern of corporate life which is a rejection of, and at the same time a challenge to, the social configurations of the world. The coming of the kingdom of God is seen only to the extent that the church grows and expands *while at the same time demonstrating true Christian community*—for the church as Christian community is a microcosm of God's cosmic reconciliation (Col. 1:20). Others retort that such reconciliation is the consequence of nurture and

should not be an obstacle to the conversion experience or at the inception of churches. "Once people grow in faith they will gradually accept others as equals and as brothers and sisters," say those who defend the establishment of unicultural churches.

We ask, however, does not the reality of churches around us point to the opposite? Is it not true that many churches gradually develop into clubs for religious folklore, becoming increasingly introverted, xenophobic, and victims of ethnic, class, or culture captivity? We note sadly that, more often than not, large churches with successful church growth programs have not made a difference in the social, racial, and cultural attitudes of their communities. My South African experience reminds me that where segregation is most deeply entrenched, many white segregationists are born-again Christians whose parents and grandparents were also born-again Christians. Their commitment to segregation is not a matter of not having gotten round to perfection; it is rather the alliance between a formal Christian commitment and a lifestyle which denies the gospel itself or subsumes it under a particular racist ideology.

In the absence of specific teaching at the very outset of a church's establishment on the true universal, multicultural, multiethnic nature of the church, the impression is conveyed that the particular local church being planted is limited to people of one defined ethnic group. However much we may protest, communication theorists assert that communication is not what you say but what they hear. It is therefore important to take cognizance that what *they hear* is that the church and racial segregation are not antithetical. We are reminded statistically that Sunday morning remains the most segregated segment of the week in the United States. Against this we must assert that it is wrong to define the church exclusively in ethnic terms. A church whose membership is coextensive with only one sociocultural group is not a church in any biblical sense.

### **Incidentals or essentials**

A further important consideration is the question of whether reconciliation is an incidental or essential part of the gospel. If it is incidental, there is no reason not to postpone this teaching in the life of the new convert or new church. The Scriptures, however, make it plain that reconciliation is at the very heart of the gospel (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Reconciliation with God, always assumed and declared to be coextensive with reconciliation to one's fellow humanity, is inextricably at the very core of the gospel message. Paul speaks of Christ's salvific act at the cross breaking down every barrier and so inaugurating "a new creation," a new humanity (Eph. 2:11-22). This new humanity is made up of people of many socioethnic backgrounds who have become reconciled to God and to each other. It is imperative that prospective Christians be counseled regarding the kind of community of which they become a part when they accept Christ's lordship over all of their lives.

### **Identity and the believers church**

Closely parallel to the foregoing is the ramification of the believers church concept espoused by the Anabaptists. This particular concept promotes the understanding that the Christian's primary identity is not as a member of a particular national, cultural, or ethnic entity, but as a child of God. A person's ethnic or family ties become secondary to the new familial relationships with Christian brothers

and sisters from many tribes and tongues and peoples and nations, who together become a part of the family of God through the common act of faith in Christ (Rev. 7:9). The church, a gathering of the family of God's people, ought to witness to the fact that all other associations—racial, national, or cultural—are of secondary significance.

### Peace and nonconformity

The Anabaptist commitment to the peace witness when adequately enunciated is not merely the quest for the cessation of hostility and conflict. It requires a commitment to building harmonious, healthy, reconciled communities. The church, in its witness to peace in a world torn apart by many racial hostilities, ethnic conflicts, and cultural divisions, must point to the reconciliation and harmonious coexistence of these different groups within church life. Without the integrity of its own life-witness, the church cannot witness for peace in the world. Besides, our Anabaptist heritage challenges us to nonconformity in the interest of preserving our loyalty to scriptural injunctions. Ethnic churches are often the consequence of succumbing to the "way of the world," of conforming to patterns in unredeemed society.

At a time when many despair of the church's cultural captivity and are looking anew at the Anabaptist ecclesiological model (Hauerwas and Willimon 1990), we must be vigilant that our eagerness to meet goals does not deceive us into surrendering our biblical distinctiveness. It is not the largess of our enterprise that will impress the world or win us God's approbation (cf. Rev. 2:8-11), but the witness of a church that reflects the triumph of God's grace and love in "making all things new."

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## The church's witness

# How My Understanding of Mission Has Developed

MILKA RINDZINSKI

I became a Mennonite Church member in 1956 in response to testimonies of the first missionaries who came to Uruguay. At that time I understood the mission of the church to be calling others to find what I had found—the way to a new life of personal holiness.

The gospel came to me in ethnic and cultural wrappings, including European and North American traditions. It was also filtered through a system of historic interpretation. Coming from a Roman Catholic tradition which I was now laying aside, it was important for me to discover and affirm my new identity. I took on the Mennonite Christian identity with enthusiasm because, by reading available Anabaptist literature, I discovered similarities between the priest Menno Simon's concerns and my own. Shortly thereafter when, because of my physical appearance, I was identified in Uruguayan Evangelical circles as a Mennonite, I thought it was amusing. I even saw it as a confirmation that I had adopted the right church. Later when I traveled in Central American countries I was not so happy when my physical appearance caused me to be

called Yankee and *gringa*.

The Mennonite Evangelical Seminary in Montevideo was inaugurated the same year I was baptized. Through the seminary I came into contact with the systematic study of the Bible and theology and discovered its importance. By helping the seminary director with correspondence related to his counseling role with other church workers in South American countries, I became conscious of the wider Mennonite community. As I shed some of my unrealistic notions of the simplicity of the Christian life, I came to feel part of this global church community. In difficult moments I am grateful to belong to this larger family and to know that I am not alone. Books and magazines help me understand the concerns and visions of other brothers and sisters, many whom I now know personally. These persons contributed to my development and helped me mature in my convictions.

I was challenged by local relatives and friends who were not part of the church and did not find meaning in a gospel "imported" by the Mennonites. Even the harshest criticism and the greatest indifference has been useful to reaffirm and revise convictions, and to point out the imperative of finding a way to embody the gospel in this local reality.

A third area of challenge has been interdenominational relationships. Each denomination has its own vision and emphases, some of which coincide with ours and some which do not. Sometimes the interdenominational activi-

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ties have served to channel personal concerns. Not being able to count on total support from our Mennonite group has caused some sadness and frustration for me at times; other times it has caused me to question. Gathering the most biblically radical emphases in church missions into a single denomination has been a recurrent dream.

When I went to Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg, France, in 1984 to participate in the Consultation on Missions, I thought we would observe and evaluate the styles and policies of the mission boards, because when we speak of *missions* we think first of mission boards and the missionaries who have come from other lands. In general, the mission of missionaries was always to win souls for Christ, and the churches that were formed interpreted their continued task and mission to be that of inviting persons around them to be converted and saved. I would like to have talked about missionary policies in Strasbourg. Nevertheless, our task at the Consultation on Missions was to interpret our reason for being, vocation, and the lifestyle of the church—in other words, our own local group.

I would say that the preoccupation to discover other responsibilities for the church apart from winning souls has entered our midst very gradually and is still not very pronounced today since there is no unified model.

As I understand it, the church today (the men and women who have accepted the call of God with Christ, the head) is the supreme channel by which God has chosen to reveal himself. First, I see the church functioning as the conscience of humanity, a sensitive nerve and spiritual eye, a bridge between humanity and a holy and just God. Second, I see the church embodying the good news of Jesus Christ in a visible way to the world, taking on an alternate lifestyle, such as community living, which will necessarily go against the tide. Thirdly, the church's task is determined by multiple and changing human needs. In this sense the church should discover that there are no areas of human life that escape the interest and activity of God. We can see this in Jesus, who ministered to human needs at spiritual and personal levels, and who realized how the social and power structures affected the men and women of his era.

To accomplish their mission the churches must be capable of discerning what the major problems are today and occupy themselves with these problems without fear of going beyond the limits of their responsibility. Here are some examples:

1. One of the tasks for the Mennonite Church in La Floresta could be to raise its voice against the carbide factory across the street, with its two tall chimneys and huge foundries contaminating the air of a densely populated area of the capital.

2. The poor and impoverished people of areas which surround the church knock at our doors. They come with their carts and look through our garbage cans for anything useful. We put our old bread in plastic bags so it won't get dirty and they can eat it. They try to sell us small objects, and we buy them. They ask for food and clothing, and sometimes we give it to them. They steal the wash off our clotheslines, and we report it to the police, hoping to recover it. We build high fences, hoping they will be discouraged and not enter again. And we hardly speak with them. We are not interested in knowing about their situation, what they think or feel. We don't pay any more attention to them than to birds.

3. Those who suffer because of injustice demand our

compassion and attention. But there are a series of words with negative connotations at which we cringe: justice, oppression, liberation, poverty. These terms and their meanings should be carefully examined with the Bible in hand because there is a tendency to spiritualize them. There is also a tendency to look at those who suffer and then decide who deserves our active compassion and who doesn't. Allegedly the church is forbidden to enter political territory, but I suspect in many cases it is simply fear of suffering that makes us "spiritual" to the point that we avoid political issues which could be dangerous to our physical integrity.

During times of military government in my country I was part of an interdenominational group that dealt with matters of mutual interest to the churches we represented. We discussed a project to create a psychological/spiritual service for the children of prisoners. Many children saw their parents snatched out of their homes never to return. Surely these children needed attention. The project was rejected by the government, and we did not dare to insist. Why do we renounce a service project so quickly when the government opposes it? To what point do we owe them obedience? This question needs to be examined.

4. In general, our churches don't express themselves on questions of political nature. I'm not saying that the church is called to govern politically nor that there can be a truly just government. But I do observe that justice-making is left to personal judgment and, as a result, church members look for orientation and channels of expression outside the church. Uruguay is a highly political country; we are legally obligated to vote, so it is impossible not to think, hold opinions, or have some political concerns.

Even those who maintain that politics are forbidden territory for the church have and express opinions. As a newspaper reporter said recently, they applaud when they hear on television that an evangelist from the Northern Hemisphere calls some governments in Central America "Satan" and thanks the president of the United States for helping the nation recover the faith.

It is lamentable that churches in general don't warn that, even if communism is atheistic, other systems can also lead to idolatry.

5. This same prejudice that church and politics must remain separate is the reason prophetic activity in the church is vague ("great things will happen"). I believe it is necessary to talk seriously about the topic in order to distinguish between "doing politics" and fulfilling our call to denounce injustice.

Of course, if the church makes its prophetic voice heard it will attract suffering to itself. Recently, meetings were held in Argentina where high-level military commanders from Latin America discussed how to confront liberation theology, among other things. It is considered revolutionary because, with its consciousness-raising work of choosing for the poor and by its demands for justice, it threatens the stability of those in power.

On the other hand, this danger of suffering makes many churches—in their zeal to make it clear they have no ties with liberation theology—spiritualize the concepts of peace, justice, liberation, and oppression.

Mennonite churches need to discover that they are heirs of a theological line that constitutes a third option.

6. The churches should be more sagacious in identifying the idols that claim *our* loyalty so that we understand our rejection of any lordship outside of the lordship of Jesus Christ. I remember once, when I was new in the evangel-

ical Mennonite faith and very patriotic, that I stood up when I heard the national anthem. The pastor looked at me with a condescending smile that intrigued me. I did not ask for explanations and none were given. It would have been a good opportunity to talk about the lordship of Jesus Christ. Many years later I discovered that the content of the anthem and the concept of patriotism contained demands that clashed with the demands of Jesus Christ. And patriotism is only one of the many idols which exist.

7. Churches should clarify what sin is today. It is necessary to read the Bible from a present-day viewpoint and, departing from biblical examples, help one another discern what is morally good or bad in our complicated world. It could be that we are laying aside sins that are disguised but are far-reaching and have great disintegrating power. I continue to believe that as followers of Christ we are called to a life of holiness and purity where there is no place for a double morality.

8. In light of the diversity of emphases among the various churches and denominations, one of the greatest challenges is the search for unity. For some reason we are inclined to compartmentalize ourselves. When we acquire a vision, we tend to concentrate on and emphasize it, even losing interest in all other emphases. This attitude denotes a mental and spiritual narrowness that must be corrected. We could ask ourselves if the emphases answer

to different callings. Our challenge is to find ways to integrate various efforts so that the ministry of the combined churches can minister to the total person in all areas of life.

I believe the church needs to discover that the Lord's calling to unity is not a calling to be identical in everything—in style of praise or understanding of how we serve our neighbor—but to love and respect each other, with mutual correction and help.

9. The Mennonite churches should deepen their radical and pacifistic Anabaptist tradition. Mennonite church members in Uruguay are mainly first-generation Christians from Roman Catholic and Pentecostal backgrounds. So the mission task of the church often marks the more active interdenominational or inter-American movements. And generally, the one that is most appealing is the one that is the most spiritual.

Unless the Mennonite churches discover and are faithful to the task that the Lord entrusts to them by sharing the vision they have inherited with the community of faith, the name "Mennonite" and being a Mennonite conference does not have true meaning.

In some cases, tradition can be a hindrance. In other cases, clarifying our identity offers support and can mark a course. In the end, following a tradition can mean making good use of a heritage of wisdom.

## In Review

*Glimpses of Glory.* By Dave and Neta Jackson. Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1987; 324 pp., \$14.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Ed Bontrager

For others like me who knew about Reba Place Fellowship but never understood its unique community of ministry, this book will be helpful. Dave and Neta Jackson are members of the Fellowship since 1973. Their easy style of reporting events seasoned with illustrations provides an intriguing account.

The authors highlight four eras: Radical Launching (1951-61); Consolidation Outreach (1962-71); The Spirit, the Power, and the Excess (1972-78); Repentance, Regrouping, and Renewal (1979-87). The vicissitudes of corporate life as the community struggled through these eras uncover some darker travailing times, yet the message is clear that God builds his people

as they take each other seriously.

Reba Place was formed as a setting where ideas of the church (Acts 4) and the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement could combine to find fulfillment in the twentieth century. The "common life" was the ideal. The community became a lighthouse for shipwrecked people, providing healing, counseling, friendship, and the message of spiritual grace. Inclusiveness and involvement in a large, loving family provided an anchor, also seen in their worship style which included drama, dance, and a more charismatic expression.

In the early '80s it was decided to form two expressions of the community, one for those who wanted to maintain the "common life," and one as a congregational expression without the "common life." And the congregation grew.

This history portrays the joining of word and deed, evangelism and social service—a model that needs to be applied to many more congregations. This is a helpful resource for churches intent in moving beyond maintenance to mission. Jacksons do not convey that this vision is easy to realize but show that intense fellowship and visionary leadership can bring effective kingdom work.

*The Unseen Face of Islam.* By Bill Musk. Eastbourne, East Sussex, England: Monarch Publications, 1989; 314 pp., 7.99 pounds sterling

Reviewed by Roelf Kuitse

Dr. Bill Musk has worked with Middle East Media and with the Episcopal Church in Egypt. His book deals with what has been called "folk Islam," the Islam experienced and expressed by people in villages and cities who struggle daily with forces that try to harm human life. In this vulnerable life, "baraka," "the evil eye," "jinn," and "saints" play an important role. The author helps readers to understand this "unusual kind of Islam," which in general does not get much attention in books about Islam. Attention is paid to holy times and holy places, holy things and holy persons, holy powerful words, and holy actions. All these phenomena are manifestations of a special worldview. This worldview is described in the second part of the book. In many cases this view of reality is in conflict with the view of official Islam, but, according to Dr. Musk, this view is "accepted and even nurtured within the embrace of the alternative, official worldview" (p. 225).

The book also deals with biblical views of reality and with the ways missionaries can respond to the challenges of folk Islam and the longings and fears which find expression in folk Islam.

This is an excellent book, one which helps us in understanding the role of Islam

### CORRECTION

In the March 1990 issue of *Mission Focus*, the editors omitted an introduction of Linford Stutzman, author of the article *An Incarnational Approach to Mission in Modern Affluent Societies*. Working with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions, Linford and his wife, Janet, have given leadership to the Perth Mennonite Fellowship in Lathlain, Australia since 1987.

Ed Bontrager, with previous pastoral assignments in Ohio, California, and Pennsylvania, is currently Director of Evangelism and Church Development for Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana.

in the lives of many people. The book should be read by all who have established relations with the Muslim neighbor.

*Roelf Kuitse has been a professor of missions and world religions at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.*

*New Testament Ethics.* By Dale Goldsmith. Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1988, 185 pp., \$9.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Elmer A. Martens

A book that surveys eight New Testament writers in as many chapters and begins with James, Paul, and Peter would seem to be omitting Jesus. Not so! Each writer, including Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is interrogated as to his understanding of Jesus. Convictions inform ethics.

Pauline material is focused on conscience, which functions primarily as an "after-the-act analyzer." Not rules, but needs of others, govern ethics.

Goldsmith is shy on specifics, for he contends that ethics is more a matter of character than lists of dos and don'ts. Given new situations and the fact that ethical directives cannot encompass all situations anyway, the author urges that Christian ethics is essentially the ethics of love to others. This is the one ethical directive that all New Testament writers share.

The book's strength is citing the "angle of vision" governing each New Testament writer's ethical statement, the repeated emphasis on love as expressing the will of God ethically, and helpful insights, such as Matthew's call to be creative. End-of-chapter questions for reflection facilitate use of the book for Bible classes.

The author fears legalism. Sadly, rather than to present an adequate theology of law, legal-type material is disparaged. Somewhat worrisome is the notion that we need to dialogue with the New Testament but that our answers lie outside it. More is needed on how love is to be specifically fleshed out. Goldsmith, an ordained Princeton-educated Presbyterian minister and now administrator/teacher at McPherson College, has nevertheless provided a solid popularly-written contribution to the growing literature on biblical ethics.

*Elmer A. Martens, formerly President of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, continues as Professor of Old Testament.*

*What Makes a Missionary.* By David M. Howard. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1987, 96 pp., \$5.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Wanda Derksen-Bergen

Howard has addressed an important topic which could lend itself to elaborate theories and intellectual theology, but instead he has chosen to bring his thoughts down to earth in a simple, straight-forward manner.

Howard follows the life of Peter and how Jesus prepares Peter step-by-step for service. He begins with Jesus calling Peter, followed by the growth of Peter and even the failures of Peter as a missionary. We then continue to read how Jesus restored Peter and gave him triumph as a person called to be a missionary to the Gentiles. Jesus challenges Peter to serve with humility, love, and compassion for all persons. Howard includes accounts of personal experiences along with the study of Peter and challenges readers to examine whether they, too, have the spirit and character to serve with the humility, love, and compassion exemplified by Jesus.

My main disappointment in this book is that it lacks any tone of radical discipleship or fresh ideas. Although we need to be reminded of the basics of missionary service, I miss the challenge of being on the cutting edge, forced to explore new avenues of what it takes to be a missionary. However, the simplicity of the book opens it up to a wide audience of people.

*Wanda Derksen-Bergen is Co-Personnel Secretary for the Commission on Overseas Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas.*

*Teaching to Change Lives.* By Howard G. Hendricks. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987, 180 pp., \$9.95, \$7.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Daniel Schipani

In this how-to book, Howard G. Hendricks, well-known author and lecturer in evangelical circles, articulates what he calls the "passion to communicate" the Word of God in terms of seven principles or "laws." He does that by utilizing the word teacher as an acronym—t-e-a-c-h-e-r. The book thus consists of seven chapters, each one dealing with a major principle: 1) The law of the teacher—ongoing personal growth

is essential for teaching; 2) the law of education—how people learn determines how you teach; 3) the law of activity—maximum learning is the result of maximum involvement in meaningful activity; 4) the law of communication—to truly impart information requires the building of bridges; 5) the law of the heart—teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart; 6) the law of encouragement—teaching tends to be most effective when the learner is properly motivated; 7) the law of readiness—the teaching-learning process will be most effective when both students and teacher are adequately prepared.

Easy to read, with many anecdotes, practical pointers, and suggestions for further exploration, this book can be a nice gift to teachers in Sunday school as well as other settings. It can be used for teacher training provided that biblico-theological and educational foundations are properly dealt with elsewhere.

*Daniel Schipani is Professor of Christian Education and Personality at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana.*

*Ministry of Missions to African Independent Churches.* Edited by David A. Shank. Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1987 (reprinted 1989), 291 pp., \$21.50 (pb) plus postage

Reviewed by Hans Kasdorf

David Shank has been engaged in a variety of ministries among the African Independent Churches (AICs) in French West Africa since 1976.

In July 1986 the Mennonite Board of Missions sponsored a Conference on Ministry to the AICs held at Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Shank was the prime architect behind this venture. His objective was twofold: a) to bring together AIC leaders from various groups who would not otherwise meet each other to discuss differences as well as similarities and common goals; b) to assist Western Christians in getting a better understanding of the way the Lord is building his church in Africa. The book is evidence that Shank succeeded remarkably well with the first objective; the second depends on the number and type of people reading the book.

The book consists of papers read at the conference by a team of resource persons from Africa, America, and Europe who know from personal experience and scientific studies both history and makeup of the AICs. Introductory materials, 14 chapters, and several appendices offer at least 18 windows through which anglophone readers around the world can take an objective look at the AIC origins and developments, structures and relationships, worldviews and struggles, concerns and aspirations.

This phenomenal movement of our time has some 30 million followers involving about 8,000 African denominations. The names alone are intriguing: Power in Christ Church; Church of Abraham; Toviator Healing Church; Almighty Jehovah Jesus Christ Church; Christ Action Church; and God Have Mercy Church (cf. pp. 59-86).

Missiologists, mission leaders, church historians, and pastors who want to know what God is doing in Africa should read this book.

*Hans Kasdorf is Professor of World Mission and department chair at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California.*

**Witness: Empowering the Church.** By A. Grace Wenger and Dave and Neta Jackson. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989, 196 pp., \$8.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Arnie Neufeld**

The authors of this book believe that the primary and urgent task of the church is to "go and make disciples of all nations." They maintain that telling "others about Christ is not an option like dessert after a full meal. It is part of the nature of being Christian.... Winning others to Christ is not one of the many duties of the church... Winning others to Christ is the church's reason for existence" (p. 28).

The book contends that the mission of the church has not been placed into the hands of a select few, nor is it the responsibility of leaders. Rather, all members of the body of Christ should contribute to and participate in this important venture.

In order to be effective in outreach, Christians must be renewed in worship, directed by the Holy Spirit, and encouraged and supported through the fellowship

of the church. However, worship and fellowship are not only the blessing of those who have become members of the "believing family"; they are "part of the content of the Christian message" (p. 124). Recognizing the value of care groups, the authors provide helpful suggestions on how to organize, strengthen, and enlarge such fellowship groups in the church. They provide many Scripture references, illustrations, and stories, and leave the reader with the message: "We did it; you can, too."

Each of the 13 chapters concludes with a series of discussion questions. The book could be used as an effective guide in a church study group, or serve as a text in a more formal classroom situation. It is practical, biblical, and inspirational. We recommend it highly.

*Arnie Neufeld, Winkler, Manitoba, is pastor of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church.*

**Mennonites in China.** By Robert and Alice Ruth Ramseyer. Winnipeg, MB: China Educational Exchange, 1988 (revised 1989), 115 pp., \$5.00 U.S., \$6.00 Canada (pb)

**Reviewed by Hugh Sprunger**

It is appropriate and commendable that the China Educational Exchange, a cooperative effort of different Mennonite church groups relating to China, commissioned the writing and publishing of this book. It meets a long-felt need on the part of many Mennonite China-watchers and participants in work in China and among Chinese people. Different Mennonite groups worked in China in the first half of the twentieth century. They essentially worked independently and each group published its own accounts of its work in China, the churches, leaders, and missionaries. The story of Mennonites in China was fragmented. It was difficult to get an overall picture.

The Ramseyers, in brief compass, give the big picture of Mennonites in China from 1895 up to about 1951, with some glimpses about churches and leaders in the years since that time. The Mennonite story is preceded with a short summary of Christian mission in China in chapter one. Chronologically and geographically, the Mennonite story then unfolds from 1901 on Shandong-Henan border to Fujian, Inner Mongolia, and West China. It is a

fascinating story. The historical sweep ends with an afterword. This chapter gives credit to many Mennonite efforts for a holistic gospel emphasis but faults Mennonites, like many others, for failing to emphasize mutuality in sharing. This brief summary is most helpful and raises questions for present and future relationships with Chinese people and Christians.

The book is not intended to be a definitive history of Mennonite missions in China or the story of missionaries. However, a list of Mennonite missionaries is appended. The focus is on the churches and leaders which emerged in China as a result of Mennonite work there. This emphasis is noteworthy.

This is an important book for all persons interested in missions and overseas churches. Mennonites from all different backgrounds and groups should read it to be aware of what sister Mennonites did in China. Not only North American ethnic Mennonites need to read this book but also Chinese Mennonites in North America, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China in order to be aware of the larger family of which they are a part.

*Hugh Sprunger is a Mennonite missionary, first working in Taiwan with the Commission on Overseas Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church from 1954-1979, and now working with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions in Hong Kong from 1980 to the present.*

**Gospel, Church, and Kingdom.** By James A. Scherer. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987, 271 pp., \$14.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Calvin E. Shenk**

The author intends that this book "provide students and teachers of world missions—along with missionaries, pastors, mission executives, lay mission interpreters, and church leaders generally—with resource material for the study of recent developments in the theology of mission" (p. 5). It is a synoptic and comparative view of recent mission theology from an ecumenical perspective with the intent of promoting conversation and understanding among Christians of differing traditions concerning faithfulness to the great commission.

This is an excellent book. It is thorough

in drawing material from a wide variety of missiological conferences, consultations, councils, and seminars. It combines history and theology in a way that highlights the trends of development. The author is fair in representing the traditions. His interpretive remarks are concise, but they appropriately identify issues for thought and conversation. Though admitting that the missionary movement in the West is in crisis, the author is not pessimistic but neither does he want us to nostalgically return to the past. Rather, this should be a call to realistic vision for the present and future.

Interpretation and critique are major strengths of this book. There is formal critique at the end of the chapters on the evangelical movement and the Roman Catholic tradition. Unfortunately, there is not a similar kind of summary and critique at the end of the chapters on the conciliar movement. This could have strengthened even more the comparative dimensions.

I especially value the introductory chapter characterizing the new context for global mission and the last chapter which identifies crucial issues for mission theology. I commend the author for his insistence on theological clarification. As an Anabaptist, I also found his chapter on the history of Lutheran theology of mission to be very helpful. He has stimulated me to look again at the theology of mission in the early stages of the Reformation.

I applaud the author for his very stimulating work and highly recommend a careful reading of this book. It forces one to examine more deliberately the relationship of mission practice to clear theological reflection.

*Calvin E. Shenk is chair of the Bible and Religion Department of Eastern Mennonite College.*

**Power and Beliefs in South Africa.** By Klaus Nurnberger. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1988, 319 pp., 18 pounds sterling

Reviewed by Stan Nussbaum

When Nurnberger introduces his work as a study of "the interaction between economic power structures and patterns of conviction seen in the light of a Christian ethic" (p.1), the casual reader may suppose he or she has heard it all before. This is not

a book for casual readers.

The perceptive reader will soon find that Nurnberger attempts and largely succeeds to posit an innovative paradigm bringing together "hard" or statistical data dealing with economics and power and "soft" intangible data dealing with convictions. This experimental method does incredible things, such as relating in one diagram (p. 85) a quantified total of a person's economic needs (based on physical essentials, social group expectations and personal wishes) with the person's income position at the economic center or periphery of a society. Looking at this I felt I was conceptually "seeing" for the first time what poverty is.

The experience of "seeing" is the one I had repeatedly as I read this book. Sometimes this had to do with applications Nurnberger made—why Bantustans will never work economically (p. 23), why local elites in the third world are unconcerned about the poor in their countries (p. 68), why the poor buy radios they cannot afford (p. 102f), why corruption is rampant in postindependent Africa (p. 161), and, not least, why a feudal pattern carried over into a modern competitive setting produces oppression, i.e., why apartheid is what it is (p. 173f). At other times Nurnberger's discussion gave me a new perspective on some old problems and issues in my own experience—a realization of the crucial difference between "available" and "operative" information (p. 139) in missiology and mission administration; a revelation about why my work and personal schedules are so full (p. 273, "The rich are plagued by an overabundance of potency"); how the Fall has affected all aspects of individual and corporate life (p. 283, cf. p. 139); why the justification of war seems plausible, though it is false (p. 145).

Charts and diagrams are extremely valuable throughout the book (e.g., pp. 47, 65, 85), but a few improvements are still possible in this area. Why is figure 12 mentioned on page 51, given in statistics on page 52, and graphed on page 59? Why is no diagram given correlating the material on evangelism and social justice on pages 270-86 analogous to the diagram on page 139? (This could have been a powerful summary of the book's implications.) Why is no explicit connection made between the two major diagrams in the book, pages 139 and 283, since they obviously relate to each other?

Some theological questions also must be raised. We need to know more about Nurnberger's rejection of virtually all dogmatic criteria for church fellowship except

"Christ's redemptive love" (p. 295). Has he overreacted to apartheid's exclusiveness and produced too inclusive a view of the church? Again, is he too optimistic about the church providing a model which secular society will see and follow (p. 298)?

These questions do not detract from the book's central thrust, which perhaps could be summed up as the interaction between vested interests and worldview. Where else do we find the same writer dealing so well with both these issues in one model from the perspective of Christian ethics? There is much to learn here, and not only about South Africa. This is a book about what makes the world go around and what makes it go around painfully.

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*Stan Nussbaum is director of the Centre for New Religious Movements at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England. From 1977 through 1983 he worked in Lesotho under Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.*

**Aspiring to Freedom.** Edited by Kenneth A. Myers. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988, 169 pp., \$10.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Roelf Kuitse

"The social concerns of the Church (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*) is the subject of a papal encyclical written by Pope John Paul II and published in 1988. In this encyclical letter the present pope expresses his views—like his predecessor Paul VI did in 1967 in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*—in regard to today's social issues. The main attention is focused on the issue of development, the relation between poor and rich nations. Related to this, the papal letter deals with issues like the arms trade, the debt problem, refugees, terrorism, ecology, demography, human rights, unemployment. The pope rejects a concept of development reduced to the economic component. Ethical as well as religious components are also important. He criticizes the liberal-capitalistic and the Marxist-communistic ideologies, the first because it absolutizes "the all-consuming desire for profit," the second because it absolutizes the "thirst for power" (p. 37). Both ideologies are a hindrance to a real and full development and interdependence.

Commentaries on this encyclical are written by authors related to the Rockford

Institute Center on Religion and Society. All the commentators express their satisfaction with the encyclical's emphasis on "the right of economic initiative" and "the creative subjectivity of the citizen." They strongly criticize "the moral parallelism" (Michael Novak) between the two blocs, capitalism and communism. This moral equivalence is in contradiction with what the pope writes about human rights, the right of economic initiative, and the ethical/religious components of development. Peter Berger speaks about the language of the papal letter as the language of *tercermundismo* (third-worldism), a language used by "the peace and justice crowd who have a high stake in speaking of East and West in morally equivalent terms." His grade for the encyclical is between a B and a C+.

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*Roelf S. Kuitse has been Professor of Missions and World Religions at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana.*

***The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology.*** By Louis J. Luzbetak. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988, 464 pp., \$19.95.

**Reviewed by Levi Keidel**

Serving in the Pontifical Council for Culture, Vatican City, Luzbetak authored *The Church and Cultures: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker* in 1963. It became an undisputed classic in the field. This new edition is an updated and expanded form of his previous work, providing what appears to be his definitive statement. His earlier work was directed toward the western church worker who sought to effect cultural change from without. In keeping with the current trend away from foreign missions to global missions, this volume is addressed to ecclesial workers in local church communities who effect change from within.

The thesis of the book is that anthropological insights can and should improve mission strategy and effectiveness. It is the author's concern that such insights facilitate a form of contextualization that makes Jesus relevant.

Luzbetak's treatment is thorough, historical, and documented. Often he furnishes a paragraph of bibliographic resources to facilitate thematic research. His style is simple and straightforward; the nature and scope of his subject precludes the written text which is quickly and easily grasped.

Chapter one gives theological founda-

tions for the subject, chapter two defines the nature and scope of missiological anthropology, and chapter three provides theoretical and historical models of mission. It closes on a prophetic note—that we are moving away from the vision of global Christendom toward a situation where Christians will form a minority, and that the task of the church will be making Christ globally accessible. In chapter four, the author develops issues that impact mission, including the effects of Vatican II upon Roman Catholic theology of mission.

Then follows a scrupulous study (241 pages) of the phenomenon of culture. "Cultures are like a ball of tangled strings . . . one must study the particular tangled whole and see which string must be tackled first, which knot must be untied now and which later" (p. 244). Luzbetak examines anthropological developments: how culture is perceived, understood as a system, the nature of its dynamics, the factors which facilitate or resist its change. A final chapter attempts to synthesize anthropological theory of the preceding chapters into functioning models for the church.

This volume is not everybody's cup of tea; but for persons whose responsibility it is to be on the cutting edge of mission strategy, it provides a wealth of essential scientific knowledge.

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*Levi Keidel is currently Instructor of Mission at Columbia Bible College, Clearbrook, British Columbia.*

# Editorial

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One of the themes dominating the agenda of the churches in the West today is pluralism. Whether it is theology, culture, or religion, we find ourselves living in a time of great mobility. I continue to be fascinated by the traffic that passes through the world's airports. These are the main concourses where peoples of the most diverse social, national, and economic backgrounds come together. It is not uncommon to see people from rural villages of Africa or Asia, still feeling awkward and unfamiliar with technology, in the airports of the world's major capitals. This is a metaphor for what is happening worldwide. We cannot escape the effects of this rapid multiform movement. How are we as Christians responding to this changing situation?

1. *Religious variety.* Birmingham, England, is representative of many major cities of the West where there has been a steady growth in the number of people of Asian and African background over the past twenty years—today 15 percent of Birmingham's population would be in this category. The Central Mosque in Birmingham is the largest mosque west of Istanbul, but it is only one of fifty in the city. The majority of these people live in the crowded central sections of Birmingham. Since they originated in a variety of countries, they have brought their ethnic differences with them. Thus they tend to live as communal groups. The majority of them were villagers without special skills or education, and they have ended up on the lower rung of the social and economic ladder. One reaction of immigrant communities is to intensify their religious life as they sense the tension between the new culture and their culture of origin. They are especially eager to pass on to their children their own faith tradition. It is a situation filled with tensions and anxieties.

2. *Church variety.* Church gatherings beyond the congregational level are increasingly characterized by variety in piety, styles of worship, and nationality. For some people this is still a novelty, and the experience of such diversity is captivating. More important than these diversities is that which is given to us as the basis for unity. The whole of the post-Babel human story is dominated by our dividedness. What is worth celebrating is that we have

been given a chance for a new beginning in the work of Jesus Christ. Human differences remain, but these are to be reevaluated in light of the "broken wall." A more sober assessment of these differences helps us recognize that these divisions come about over the simplest matters and remain a source of sinning against each other.

3. *Theological variety.* Theological strife and divisions continue to dog the steps of the church. No theological idea appears in a vacuum. It is the product of a history and relationships and tendencies. Free church Protestants, with their emphasis on individual responsibility, divide and subdivide with alarming ease. Roman Catholics are presently debating John Paul II's call for "A New Evangelization" because some hear this as an appeal to restore traditional Christendom. It has created unrest because the appeal is seen within a particular history. Theological variety may stem from historical, cultural, psychological, or other "non-theological" differences.

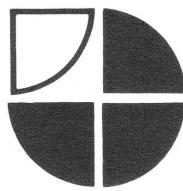
J. B. Metz has proposed that one way of mediating between these differences is that of memory. "The Church, of course, from its beginnings, is a remembering and retelling community gathered around the eucharist to devote itself to following Jesus." Memory is thus centered on suffering and redemption.

One of the special problems of Western theology is its dependence on a particular Western intellectual tradition that emphasizes rationality and system. The act of remembering and retelling puts the emphasis elsewhere: human weakness and sin, God's grace and sovereignty, death and resurrection, the movement from despair to hope, God's coming to us and our response in worship.

As A. F. Walls demonstrates, the Christian message has shown an amazing vitality in moving across cultural boundaries over time. This act of translation calls for a corollary. Translation highlights the power of the gospel to enter particular situations and there become "good news." But the process is not completed until translation issues in incorporation into the universal fullness of the new humanity in Christ Jesus.

—Wilbert R. Shenk

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## The Growth of the Early Church Reflections on Recent Literature

ALAN KREIDER

Why did the early church grow? For most of this century the reflexive response of scholars to this has been, "Look in Harnack." Adolf von Harnack's *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* is one of the heavyweight books of church history; it has filled the footnotes of generations of scholars. For a long time, as far as these writers were concerned, it seemed that the topic of the early church's mission had been "done."

No longer. Within the current decade, scholars are beginning to look anew at the growth of the early—post-apostolic, pre-Constantinian—church. One of these scholars, the Roman Catholic Norbert Brox, wrote an important article, *On Christian Mission in Late Antiquity*, from a perspective similar to Harnack—that of church history. Two others, Ramsay MacMullen and Robin Lane Fox, have fresh things to say because their books come at the topic from a different angle. Both are eminent classicists, bringing the perspectives of ancient history and literature to bear on the life of the early Christians. MacMullen's *Christianizing the Roman Empire* argues a dubious thesis with learning and panache; Lane Fox's *Pagan and Christian*, on the other hand, is a magisterial study.

Brox, Lane Fox, and MacMullen offer insights that fascinate and invite us to ponder our own time in new ways. Drawing from all three, and occasionally from other authorities as well, we can listen critically to this new generation's approaches to the growth of the early church.

To begin with, the early church was a growing church. On this obvious fact, both Lane Fox and MacMullen make fascinating observations. Lane Fox notes that there are few statistics, and that these must be interpreted with care. In Rome in A.D. 251, for example, there were 154 ministers of one sort or another and 1,500 widows and poor people; ten years earlier, in Dura Europos on the Euphrates, a wall was knocked down in the house where the church met, allowing 60 persons rather than 30 to attend the meetings. From figures like these, Lane Fox infers a small but growing Christian movement. It was widely scattered throughout the ancient world, most densely rooted in the cities, and "very much the

exception" in the countryside. Less cautious than Lane Fox, MacMullen hazards an approximate growth rate for early Christianity. From the end of the first century, the Christian church grew by approximately one-half million members per generation, giving a total of five million members—8 percent of the imperial population—at the time of Constantine's conversion in A.D. 312. (Lane Fox's estimate is somewhat smaller: 4 to 5 percent.)

Why this growth? It was not, our authorities agree, for reasons that would seem self-evident to most modern missiologists. The early church did not have an organized missionary program. There was no sign, Lane Fox comments, "of a mission directed by church leaders . . . we cannot name a single active Christian missionary between St. Paul and the age of Constantine" (Lane Fox 1986:282). Brox agrees that "there was no organization of mission" (1982:193). After the first generation, the church's leaders were pastoring already existing churches, not founding new ones or winning new believers; and there were, of course, no mission boards! The growth of the early church was not planned; for all of the Christians' active recruitment of new believers, it was as if by "accident" (Brox 1982:224).

Was this growth because the early Christians prayed and theologized about mission? Not so, Brox argues. The early believers rarely prayed for the conversion of non-Christians; he cites an article by Yves Congar, who has found only eight examples of such prayers in the entire Christian literature of the first three centuries (Brox 1982:211-212). Similarly, the early church did not have a well-developed missionary theology. "Mission was not a theme in the surviving early sermons. The concern for mission, as well as the necessity of the conversion of non-Christians and the corresponding duty of Christians to participate in a general missionary duty, was almost never expressed" (Brox 1982:193-194).

Themes dear to later Christians do not appear in the writings of the early believers. Jesus' commission in Matthew 28:16-20 is never cited as a motive for mission. This commission, the early Christians contended, had already been fulfilled; it had been a task limited to the original apostles, which they had carried out by scattering systematically across the world and founding churches. By doing

this, they had asserted Jesus' lordship over every land and people; their missionary effort had been the central episode in "the world-historical drama of the proclamation of the gospel" (Brox 1982:206). Henceforth there would be no apostles (Ephesians 4:11 is superseded); instead there would be pastors and teachers, who would faithfully carry on the traditions of Christ Jesus as laid down by his monogenerational apostles.

But growth of new believers and new congregations would continue. It would take place within the framework already established by the apostles. Until Christ returned, however, this growth would never be all-encompassing. In the meantime, as the church continued to be embattled in its struggle with the "world," its members would give primary attention to their intramural life.

If the primary focus of the pre-Constantinian Christians was thus directed inward, why the growth of their churches? Our authorities all agree in rejecting one reason and affirming another.

The reason they reject is the pattern of public preaching recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. They would thus give little credence to Michael Green's conviction that, despite the lack of evidence, "there can be no doubt that this open-air evangelism continued throughout the first two centuries" (Green 1970:157). In an empire in which Christianity was an officially proscribed *superstition*, public preaching would court danger for preacher and audience alike. To be sure, there were, especially in the first two centuries, "charismatically inclined loners" who wandered from one community to another (Brox 1982:218). But these appear to have taught and missionized quietly, domestically. It is thus not surprising that the pagan Caecilius' view of Christianity is that of a low-profile movement: "The Christians are a secret tribe that lurk in darkness and shun the light, silent in public, chattering in corners" (Minucius Felix 1931:8,4).

"Chattering in corners"—this points to the reason which our authorities agree to affirm. Early Christians, following their trades around the empire, intermingled purposefully with their neighbors. Their lifestyle was one of "presence and conspicuousness" (Brox 1982:226). While at their jobs, they combined hard work with talking; in crowded urban tenement buildings they met others in the stairways. "Simply as neighbors, the Christians were naturally everywhere" (MacMullen 1984:42). Denied a place in the forum, the Christians were present in ordinary, workaday settings where their character and common life were evident to people who knew them and, on other grounds, trusted them. On this level, "it was simply not possible or necessary to conceal one's prayers or worship of God from everyone's eyes" (Lane Fox 1986:316).

So what did the Christians have to offer their neighbors? At this point our authorities part company. Part of the fascination of MacMullen's book is that he is so sure, so simple, so categorical in his analysis. Early Christian churches grew because the Christians, while wielding a stick, proffered a carrot. The Christian message was stark and unyielding. There is one God who will judge all people with severity and condemn to everlasting torment those who do not turn to him. But for those who, alarmed by this prospect, do repent, God will demonstrate his reality by works of supernatural power. Whether in healing a diseased neighbor or cleansing a heathen shrine, God was a God of miracles.

MacMullen recognizes that, in raising this subject, he is trespassing on "a historiographical 'no-go' area" (1984:27).

But he insists that historians should reflect, not their own worldview, but the worldview of the people whom they are studying. "I report as faithfully as I can what people of that ancient time believed" (1984:24)—and not only of that time, but of many non-Enlightenment cultures throughout history. (In a significant aside, MacMullen sees parallels in the West African ministry of William Wade Harris [1984:23-24]). For example, exorcism was "possibly the most highly rated activity of the early Christian church." And, when people joined the church, it was miracles which had been "the chief instrument of conversion" (1984:26-27). Other reasons—the message of Christians, their apologetic writings, their lifestyle, their martyrdoms—MacMullen deprecates. For him, the growth of the early church was a result of supernatural acts.

What evidence does MacMullen have for his thesis? From the post-Constantinian period he cites examples—from Hilarion, Anthony, Martin—of "theological demonstrations." Prior to Constantine, he notes that the church in Rome, which Lane Fox had used for statistical estimates, had among its 154 ministers no fewer than 52 exorcists. But his primary focus is Gregory, the mid-third century

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**MISSION FOCUS** (ISSN 0164-4696) is published quarterly at 500 S. Main St., Elkhart, Indiana, by Mennonite Board of Missions.

Single copies available without charge. Send correspondence to Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370. Second-class postage paid at Elkhart, Indiana, and at additional mailing offices. Lithographed in USA. Copyright 1990 by Mennonite Board of Missions.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to MISSION FOCUS, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370.

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bishop of Pontus in north-central Asia Minor. Between 240 and 270 this pupil of Origen did his best to spread Christianity in this rough terrain. According to several accounts of his life, his ministry was marked by showdowns with local demons in which the Christian God was invariably victor. As a result, whereas when Gregory began his episcopate there were 17 Christians in Pontus, by the end there were 17 non-Christians! For subsequent generations, Gregory of Pontus has thus come to be known as “the Wonder-Worker.” And MacMullen suspects, although surviving evidence is admittedly lacking, that there must have been comparable mass conversions elsewhere (1984:61).

Brox, who doesn’t mention the miraculous dimension—and who, writing in German, is more up-to-date with continental than Anglo-Saxon scholarship—does not evaluate MacMullen’s thesis. For him, Gregory is the exception that proves his rule—“the exception in planned surface expansion” (Brox 1982:228). Lane Fox does grapple with MacMullen. Like MacMullen, he views Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Gregory* of a century later as over-elaborated hagiography. But he also rejects the substantial reliability of the Syriac account of Gregory’s life which is so central to MacMullen’s analysis (Ryssel n.d.). As often in ancient history, the scholarly debate turns on an evaluation of evidence. Is the Syriac Life a pre-Constantinian work which, despite “some nonsense,” is “otherwise acceptable on grounds of simplicity and logic” (MacMullen 1984:145)? Or is this work “a legendary panegyric, with its own touches of imaginary color” (Lane Fox 1986:760)? And, hovering over it all, there is the philosophical question—do miracles occur, and if so, how important are they?

How do we adjudicate this dispute? My own sense, having read the German translation of the Syriac, is that many of the events described in it could have happened. And, with David Aune, I observe that “magic was a characteristic feature of early Christianity from its very inception” (Aune 1979:1557).

But ultimately, I believe, MacMullen fails to convince because he pushes too hard. The exorcists in Rome, for example, were engaged in the repeated, routine exorcisms of baptismal candidates far more than in “power contests” with demons in the public domain. And elsewhere the slenderness of MacMullen’s evidence is apparent. As Lane Fox—who has rightly or wrongly discounted the Syriac Life of Gregory—states, between the apostolic age and Constantine “we know of no historical case when a miracle or an exorcism turned an individual, let alone a crowd, to the Christian faith” (1986:327).

So MacMullen’s case, it seems to me, is stimulating but exaggerated. But while building on Brox and Lane Fox, we must acknowledge MacMullen’s contribution. Within a multifaceted framework of explanations of the early church’s growth, we can give miracle a genuine but subsidiary place.

Why then did the early churches grow? In addition to those matters we have already discussed, Lane Fox and Brox offer us a final reason which has to do with the believers’ unique amalgam of message and lifestyle. The believers conveyed their message by many forms of persuasion. In major cities, Brox emphasizes, there were philosophical schools, in which Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and others dealt with contemporary questions and thought patterns. There were also the writings of the apologists: Justin, Tertullian, Athenagoras, Origen, and the

rest. To be sure, there were not many apologists; and, as Brox points out, they were at times lacking in argument and style. But at their best they advanced communicative statements of the Christian faith and hope. Lane Fox, whose knowledge of ancient literature is wide in scope, is impressed by the apologists. In the third century, for example, of all surviving literature, “in bulk detail the longest texts are written by Christians with a case to plead” (Lane Fox 1986:331,572).

But vastly more typical than the philosophers or writers, and certainly more socially significant, were the humble Christians who, in household or workplace, gave witness to their faith. The pagan critic Celsus describes how they operated: “We see in private houses workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons of the most uninstructed and rustic character, not venturing to utter a word in the presence of their elders and wiser masters; but when they get hold of the children privately, and certain women as ignorant as themselves, they pour forth wonderful statements, to the effect that they ought not to give heed to their fathers and to their teachers, but should obey them . . . that they alone know how people ought to live, and that, if the children obey them, they will both be happy themselves, and will make their home happy also” (Origen 1872:3,55).

In this account, the centers of mission are humble—the inner part of the ancient house (“the women’s house”) or the workshop. The missionaries, like their audiences, are working people. They are stating a view of religion and society that will be unacceptable to their social superiors. And this is important practically, for their “philosophy” impinges upon lifestyle—“they alone know how people ought to live.” In this text as elsewhere, it is marginal people—women and children—who are the primary recipients of this unsettling message.

The Christians’ message was unsettling, because it came at a time when the empire’s order was beginning to crumble from within. By the third century the imperial coinage was being debased, order was breaking down, and society was becoming increasingly hierarchical, as the urban rich were being economically and legally distanced from the rest of society. Hopelessness was widespread, and the gods seemed powerless to address the crisis. In this setting the Christian message spoke a word of hope—for this world and beyond. “Among second-century authors,” Lane Fox observes, “it is the Christians who are the most confident and assured” (1986:331).

The churches of the early centuries thus continued to engage themselves with the task that Wayne Meeks has found in the Pauline congregations—they “were engaged . . . in constructing a new world” (Meeks 1984:192). The Christian message involved more than propositions to affirm; it was an invitation to live in a new way, to participate in a new social reality which was both local and “catholic.” It took years of apprenticeship to become acculturated to the thought patterns and mores of this new community. Hence the lengthy periods of catechumenate which preceded Christian baptism (Lane Fox 1986:326). That candidates were willing to put up with this, and to endure the severe persecution that at times could break out, was a sign that in the churches they found a love which touched them in their motivational cores.

As the third century progressed, gradual changes were taking place. In the Christian communities, numbers were increasing. Emphases were changing as well. There was an increasing tolerance for deviant behavior and an

increasing intolerance of deviant doctrine. At the same time as there were periodic, empire-wide bursts of intense persecution which often tore their communities apart, there was also a growing local tolerance for the Christians. Christians were settling down, relaxing.

But nothing that the Christians had hitherto experienced prepared them for the jolt they received in A.D. 312 when the Emperor-claimant, Constantine, embraced their faith and a year later legalized it. With the emperor as coreligionist, the Christian church entered a new era in its missionary history. Assisted by methods that MacMullen, with typical vivacity, calls "flattery and battery" (1984:119), the church throughout the fourth century grew six-fold. Even so, over half of the empire's population remained outside the church. So, under Theodosius II and his successors, the violence of state and mob was directed against persistent pagans. The result was a Christianized society filled with "partial converts," people who "made such adaptations as were really necessary and kept what they could" (MacMullen 1984:116-117). In this new era called "Christendom," we have traveled far from the understandings and methods by which the early church grew.

What is the relevance of this survey for us? It may, in part, be a reminder of the distantness of history. The phrase "the early church" trips seductively off our tongues. Looking at its reality more carefully—as we have begun to do here—makes us realize that in many ways we would not "restore it" even if we could! I personally find much to admire in the experience of the early Christians but also much that puzzles me and inspires further exploration. One such thing is the phenomenon, noted by both MacMullen and Lane Fox, of the early Christians' "very unsteady focus on the role of Jesus" (MacMullen 1984:20; Lane Fox, 1986:353). Other readers will note contemporary themes or approaches which are underdeveloped or missing altogether among the early Christians.

There is much we can learn from the early Christians. From the other side of the gulf of Christendom—in which Christian missionary activity has been difficult—come hints of other understandings which can have relevance to our own time. Herbert Butterfield, the great Cambridge historian, was fascinated by our position at a point in history at which Christianity is no longer politically or

culturally compulsory. This, he felt, was a moment not for mourning but for mission. "We are back," he wrote, "for the first time in something like the earliest centuries of Christianity, and those early centuries afford some relevant clues to the kind of attitude to adopt" (Butterfield 1949:135).

So the early churches offer us not a cure-all but clues. May we listen discerningly, and act upon what we hear.

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## Missionaries and Social Change

JOSEPH LIECHTY

During the first half of the nineteenth century, evangelicals led a "Protestant crusade" to convert Ireland's majority Catholic population to Protestantism. The crusaders came to the task with varied motivations. The motives of some were simple and personal: transformed themselves by an experience of personal faith, they wanted to share this blessing with others. Other Protestants understood themselves as working for broader social goals: in an age

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when penal laws were no longer a tenable means of social control, they realized that "Protestant ascendancy" in Ireland could continue only if large numbers of Catholics became Protestants. But most Protestants seem to have been unaware of any possible contradiction. They believed that all their goals for individuals and for society, spiritual and political, were entirely compatible.

While this was a crusade that shed no blood, it did create bitter controversy. Catholics resented both the spiritual and the political intentions of Protestants, but especially the way the two were linked. "The Bible, without note or

comment," said one contemporary Catholic writer, "is not less a means of Protestant dominion than the Orange Yeoman's military array." The low point of sectarian controversy came during a devastating famine (one million dead, one million emigrated) in the late 1840s, when Catholics accused some Protestant missionaries of "souperism"—distributing food, usually soup, to starving Catholics only on condition that they become Protestants or at least attend Bible classes. The crusade finally wound down in the 1860s when a census revealed that half a century of evangelistic effort, sectarian tension, social turmoil, and emigration had left the religious profile of Ireland essentially unaltered.

But memories of the Protestant crusade live on. I recently attended a widely publicized book launch by a predominantly Catholic group which hopes to channel Catholic memories of the famine into greater worldwide effort toward preventing and relieving famines. So far so good, but in stimulating Catholic memories, are they prepared to deal with the sectarian resentments that lie just below the surface? I think not, so I have opened up dialogue with them about how these memories of souperism can be dealt with redemptively. The national radio network recently featured a controversy about a bitter attack on "born-again Christians" by a Catholic priest. As a result of the broadcast my co-worker, Mike Garde, who ministers to persons affected by marginal religious groups, spent much time on the phone answering questions from confused journalists, priests, and independent Bible church members. The high level of interest and passion makes no sense at all except for the lingering effects of the Protestant crusade. More than a century later, the legacy of Protestant missionary efforts is central in shaping Mennonite witness in Ireland!

The story of the Protestant crusade and its enduring consequences is a sobering reminder of the complex relationship between missionaries and social change. Missionaries are nothing if not change agents, and yet for various reasons we are frequently not conscious of this. A self-conscious identity as a change agent means thinking about the present in the light of the future; it means reflecting on the tension between what is and what might be. But busy lives, filled to the brim with the demands of the present, can sometimes leave little opening for the light of the future to shine in. Furthermore, our participation in the modern hatred of imperialism and our appreciation for the integrity of human culture leave us suspicious of the very idea of promoting change in another society. This pop anthropology, coupled with our awareness of how missionaries have sometimes abused their role as change agents, brings ambivalence about our role in bringing about change—we may prefer to avoid giving this topic much deliberate attention.

Ambivalence is undoubtedly a healthy mind-set to inform the task of bringing about change. But the fundamental fact remains that if we are doing our job, we are change agents. We may not be comfortable with this, we may not even be aware of it, but we cannot escape it. The most low-key, culture-sensitive, self-critical missionary stance conceivable still contains within it a change-creating impulse. Just as inescapable, as change agents we will work with a strategy. We are creatures of habit and pattern, and that pattern reveals the outline of our strategy. Strategies may be intentional or unintentional, coherent or incoherent, conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit, but we always have a strategy. If by definition

change agents must have a strategy, we profit by facing this directly and by devoting time and attention to clarifying what goals we work toward and the strategies by which we mean to achieve them.

One necessary starting point is understanding how the process of change works. The ideas that follow are some that I have developed or borrowed, principally through the study of history. The subject of change is infinitely complex and subtle, and every assertion can be qualified into oblivion, but I hope these few simple points might be helpful.

**1. There is no such thing as rapid radical change.** All change is relatively slow and evolutionary, proceeding by small increments, because the past carries a huge force of inertia. If change has been rapid, then it only appears to be radical, because the weight of the past cannot be held off forever, and the apparently radical change will collapse or succumb to a backlash. If change has been genuinely radical, then it only appears to be rapid, and careful examination of the change will reveal that it was a long time in the making, and perhaps that those who brought about the change build on hidden roots in surprising and creative ways. Revolutions often reveal vividly this dynamic of change. Many times, when the dust has settled and the blood has stopped flowing, enormous energy, vast suffering, and fantastic rhetoric will produce no more than a change of regime. Even the most rigorous and brutal efforts cannot guarantee change. Religion and ethnicity were subjected to devastating attacks after the Bolshevik Revolution, and yet with every passing day we seem to find out more about how both remain vital, even explosive, forces in the USSR. Although the staggering recent events in eastern Europe might appear superficially to be examples of rapid radical change, they are in fact the opposite. Revolutionary societies were going to sweep away the past, start over, create a New Man; but now these efforts are crumbling, and in the rubble we find the old problems reasserting themselves and demanding attention once again. When a revolution is successful and to some extent radical, it will be so because it took the time to bring along the whole people (or at least a majority), and it will have built on the roots of the previous society. Social change is a slow and complex process, and we must not be fooled, seduced, or detracted by the lure of rapid change.

**2. We control change only to a very limited extent.** Because the momentum of the past is so great and the dynamics of change are so complicated, we cannot necessarily engineer even relatively simple and straightforward changes, and results become even more difficult to calculate if the desired changes are radical and complex. Sometimes, in fact, our efforts may produce results nearly opposite what we intended. I am reminded of those early nineteenth-century Irish Protestants who circulated the Bible among Irish Catholic peasants, confident that it must have a pacifying political effect, only to find that the peasants were quite capable of searching the Scripture for apocalyptic passages supporting their popular prophecies about the imminent demise of Protestantism. And I think of missionaries who have devoted great care and effort to introducing the gospel to traditional or primal cultures, only to find that their efforts are overtaken by, or even contribute to, forces of modernization that destroy the culture they wanted to serve.

**3. The slowness of change and the difficulty of controlling it have basic implications for our strategies.** In the first place, if the change we seek is at all substantial,

we had better be prepared for the long haul. Having made that commitment, we are confronted with a paradox: on the one hand, we must develop our strategies for change with all the care, wisdom, and sophistication we can muster, so that we take into account as many factors as possible; on the other hand, having worked hard to develop our strategies, we must not take them too seriously, because we cannot possibly take everything into account, and therefore our strategies may not serve the ends we desire. Holding these attitudes together is extremely difficult—we are likely to become quite attached to the strategies in which we invested so much effort—but it must be done, because our attachment can work against our goals. To avoid the trap of idolatrous infatuation with particular strategies, we must realize that every long-term plan can only be provisional. The idea that we can attain a distant end through a complex series of steps is an extremely dangerous illusion. Therefore, while keeping distant goals in mind, we must be comfortable taking small and relatively calculable steps, and we must be satisfied that the next small step we take has integrity in and of itself, that ends and means are in perfect harmony. Then we must continually reevaluate our strategies. Is our goal still the same? Has the situation changed so that our strategy needs to be altered? Patience and flexibility are essential qualities in those who seek change.

**4. The raw material a change agent works with is the present. But we will only understand the present in a superficial and probably deceptive way unless we know the course by which the present came to be.** Therefore, because knowledge of the past is our most basic tool for understanding the present, every missionary must pay attention to history. Granted, I come with a particular bias on this point, having spent several years working for a Ph.D. in Irish history as a way of strengthening Mennonite witness in Ireland. During the course of my studies I occasionally asked myself, can I justify my studies to MBM, MCC, and the Mennonite church? However, having finished the degree and begun applying what I learned, I am inclined to reverse the question: Could the Mennonite church justify witness in Ireland *without* having someone study Irish history? No, I am not suggesting that every missionary needs a Ph.D. in history. There are many good ways (including nonacademic ways) of gaining a grasp of the past, and furthermore some people can do this work on behalf of others. But by whatever means acquired, a sense of the past is essential to missionary work.

**5. However, not just any sense of the past will serve missionary purposes.** Attitudes toward the past run along a continuum between ignoring the past and worshiping it. Ignoring the past is obviously foolish, because it will lead to shallow analysis and ill-conceived change. But a reactionary reverence for the past is an equally dangerous attitude with many adherents. Especially in times of great social tension, false prophets appear who are so overcome by the problems of society that they can do no more than shout, “Stop and return to the old ways!” But even if some past situation were genuinely more desirable than the present, the huge momentum of the past works against returning as surely as it does against radical change. In fact, advocates of reactionary reverence for the past and advocates of rapid, radical change are working with essentially the same dangerously ahistorical assumptions, however different their goals. What missionaries require is a stance of creative transformation, which will look to the future without ignoring the past, and look to the past without being bound by it. In this we have no better model than Jesus, who came to fulfill the law, not abolish it, but whose creative transformations of Jewish tradition were so surprising that many of those who believed they were friends of the law took Jesus to be an enemy of the law.

Even so brief a discussion of the nature of change carries with it some obvious demands on those who would promote change. To be a change agent is an awesome and humbling task. “Nothing is worth doing which can be achieved in our lifetime, therefore we must be saved by hope,” said Reinhold Niebuhr. “Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history: therefore we must be saved by faith” (1952:63). These are words every missionary should remember. Our capacity for self-deception is so great, the possibilities for being overwhelmed or co-opted by other forces are so vast, and the process of change is so complex and subtle, that unless we approach our work utterly without triumphalism, with hope and with patience, in prayer and in faith, we may very well do more harm than good. It is our responsibility to be aware of the nature of change, informed by a sense of the past, and armed with thoughtful strategies. But the journey that must begin with the very best work we can offer must end in faith that God will use it for his purposes.

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# How My Understanding of Mission Has Developed

HENRY J. SCHMIDT

My initial interest in mission was fostered in our home, which was the “watering hole” for many missionaries and itinerant preachers who came to minister in our small, rural church. During my childhood years I recall fearing that if I really surrendered myself to God, he would send me to Africa. Although my understanding of mission was limited, I was sure that Africa was not my preference. Several years of Bible Institute and a particular recommitment experience at age 18 forced me to rethink my concept of God and of his mission in the world. I began to understand the depth of God’s love, God’s concern for the reconciliation of all people to himself through Christ, and God’s mission of sharing that good news through a transformed church, and was ready to become involved in God’s global concern. God, I realized, does not punish obedience, and mission has little to do with location or vocation but everything to do with obedience. To be what God calls and gifts one to be obviously has a price, but it is more a privilege than a sacrifice. The motto of my life became focused: “The will of God: nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.”

Over the years my interest in mission intensified but the exact expression of that commitment has been full of surprises. My wife and I declared our willingness to serve overseas and were prepared to go to India in 1964, but circumstances closed that door. Our commitment to mission has subsequently expressed itself in pastoring, church planting, itinerant evangelist work, mission conferences, and evangelism seminars in North America. International mission work has included short-term preaching/teaching/study assignments on all continents. For the past fifteen years I have been teaching mission and training pastors/missionaries at our denominational seminary—an assignment I had never considered in planning my career. My understanding of mission in the world has emerged in the context of struggle, study, global exposure, ministry experience, and the patient tutelage of godly teachers.

## Finding the centerpiece of God’s mission

Over the years my mission theology is increasingly rooted in God-consciousness, God-centeredness, and God-sentness. Earlier concepts of mission focused around the people’s lostness, the desperate human dilemma, and a sense of obligation to share good news with people. While I still affirm these, the most dynamic mission is motivated by a God-centered perspective which grows out of a relationship with a sending God. It is God who made the first move in creation (Gen. 1) and in our redemption by sending Jesus Christ (John 3:16). It is God who sends us into the world as he sent his own Son (John 20:21). It is God who empowers us with his authority in mission (Matt. 28:18-20). The greatest motivation in mission comes from a Trinitarian focus; a God-centered initiative, a Christ-centered message, and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment. This does not downplay the lostness or desperate plight of humanity—it focuses the centerpiece of our mission.

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## Discovering the centrality of the church in mission

My earlier orientation in evangelical Christianity placed a lot of emphasis on personal conversion and evangelism but didn’t always relate them strongly to the church. Early theological training tended to stress mission as personal evangelism, winning individuals, and sharing good news—often apart from the establishment of churches and the corporate mission responsibility. In seminary my theology of church was revamped. I realized that the church was not peripheral but central to God’s mission in the world. The Pauline pattern of emphasizing personal conversion (moral change) and of establishing local congregations (for Christian nurture and mission), places evangelism at the heart of the church’s mission. While I gratefully acknowledge the strength of para-church organizations in their clear evangelistic zeal and focus, I struggle with their theology of the church.

My conversion to the centrality of the church in mission had several personal implications. As a pastor and itinerant evangelist I began to have second thoughts about establishing my own interdenominational evangelistic organization. I chose rather to function in an evangelism ministry that was anchored within a local church, a denomination, and in the seminary community. Furthermore, my graduate program at the University of Southern California forced me to reevaluate my commitment to the church. I was suddenly faced with a host of people who believed in the church as strongly as I did, but for different reasons. They viewed the church as crucial without characterizing it as having a divine mandate, a supernatural character, or a strong sense of mission. To them the church was significant because of its historic role in shaping social ethics through biblical interpretation and its present function of socializing people into a community. While I had no quarrel with the church being a sociological or hermeneutical community, my theology of church focused its origin, character, and mission beyond those human categories.

## Focusing mission vision through spiritual renewal

From my early ministry I have been concerned with spiritual renewal in the church and its implications for mission vision. The evidences of institutionalization and routinization in the church are all too evident. The fact that North America has 350,000 churches, 80-85 percent of which have plateaued or are declining in attendance, is one indicator of institutionalization. The fact that those same churches experienced their most significant growth in the first ten years of history, and that most never exceed their membership size at the fifteenth year, speaks of a loss of mission vision and momentum.

In his article, *Church Renewal That Lasts*, Howard Snyder suggests that renewal must be personal and corporate to be genuine, structural and ideological to be ongoing, and missional in focus to be long lasting (Snyder 1984). My earlier understanding of mission assumed the priority of the first two, with an almost exclusive emphasis on the pietistic, spiritual, and personal dimensions of renewal. Such renewal, however, was short-lived. I do not question the genuineness of personal and corporate renewal, but I have come to see that if ideas, structures, and

mission vision in the church are not affected, genuine renewal is aborted. The “principalities and powers” which Paul addresses in Ephesians are not only present in the unjust social structures and political regimes in society, they also keep the church in captivity.

I concur with Ray Bakke’s observation, based on his study of eighty world-class cities, that the primary reasons for urban churches’ ineffectiveness are internal—lack of sensitivity to need, vision, and structures, focus on maintenance over mission, inflexibility—rather than external—unresponsiveness of people, resistance to the gospel. “We never did it this way before” are the seven last words of too many churches who won’t pay the price of ongoing and long lasting renewal.

### **Combining evangelistic zeal with a social conscience**

My earlier itinerant ministry reflected a strong evangelistic zeal and a concern for personal conversion. It was based on several faulty assumptions. I viewed sin primarily as personal and individual, not corporate and structural. I was convinced that if people got right with God they would “do justly, seek mercy, and walk humbly before the Lord their God” (Mic. 6:8). I focused the task of the church on bringing people good news and helping them spiritually rather than on ministering to their physical needs. Time and exposure have helped me see the depth of sin both in individuals and in social structures. I found that the converted don’t automatically have a social conscience and the “trickle-down theory” doesn’t work any better in the church than it does in economics.

The bedrock of my mission theology remains unchanged, namely, that spiritual change and personal conversion are fundamental to structural and social change. However, my study of Scripture, urban sociology, and the growth of global poverty forced me to rethink the dichotomies between evangelism and social action; spiritual and physical need; word and deed. My middle-class, North American assumptions that education, proper health facilities, adequate housing, good employment, and reliable transportation existed for all were challenged by the world’s two billion people living in poverty. A holistic ministry emphasis in evangelism and church planting is not optional to mission in the world. Viv Grigg’s charge that “the church has given the poor bread and kept the bread of life for the middle class” (Grigg 1987:17) calls for the church to commit itself intentionally to gospel proclamation and demonstration, and to establishing communities of hope among the marginalized in the world. It will take a new breed of missionaries who will take the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience to build churches among the poor.

### **Reprioritizing mission in view of globalization/urbanization**

With my small, rural, family-oriented church background, ministry in the city represented a new frontier in mission. The pluralism, diversity, mobility, rapid change, secularization, and schedules of the city challenge the church’s role as the “hub” of community life in a way I was not accustomed to from my rural past. Although my commitment to mission was strong, my vision and view of cities and urban churches needed drastic revision. I needed to be converted from my negative perspective of the city as evil—i.e., dirty, depraved, and deprived—to see it as a place of unprecedented opportunity for mission. I had to acknowledge that rural churches which were built on the

values of status quo, sameness, smallness, stability, and harmony would look different than urban churches which are characterized more by change, diversity, conflict-management, bigness, and mobility. The point is not that one is good and the other is bad; they are different, and each requires its own strategy. The issue is not personal preference but effectiveness and contextual compatibility.

In his providence God is allowing this generation to be a part of three major sociological movements which affect our mission:

1. *The urbanization of the world.* Currently 42 percent of the world’s five billion people live in cities. It is projected that by 2025 the number will increase to 55 percent and half of these will live in poverty.

2. *The Asianization of the world.* Today one out of every two people born is Asian.

3. *The internationalization of the world.* Every city of the world is a cosmopolitan mix of different people and language groups, be it the 125 language groups in the Los Angeles school system, the one million Japanese in São Paulo, or the Algerians who comprise 12 percent of the total population of Paris.

These factors have major implications for mission strategy. First, it means that this is God’s hour in the city. In the midst of mobility, social upheaval, and massive urban migrations people are more open to the gospel. Our mission must focus on the city because that is where the people are. Second, our mission will have to take more seriously the unreached people groups in North America. The old dichotomies of “home” and “foreign” mission must cease. Historically, our denomination has missionized best overseas and among religious and cultural groups with whom we had some affinity—i.e., German Mennonites, Lutherans, Baptists. Until the 1970s we gave little priority to ministry to other near neighbor ethnic groups. Our commitment to mission must place priority on the mission field at our doorstep—the 200 language groups in North America who will not be reached with English as the primary language, the international students, and the new arrivals to our shores—including the ten million Chinese anticipated after 1997.

### **Developing mission partnerships in view of a shifting center**

As a part of the Western church, which has been on the forefront of mission sending for the past century, it has been hard for me to face the fact that the center of gravity in mission is also shifting. The decline of the West as a primary economic and political player on the world scene and the rapid growth of the church in the two-thirds world changes one’s perspective on mission. For nineteen centuries following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity grew to embrace one-third of all humanity—yet more than 80 percent of these were white in 1900. The year 1980 was a watershed for evangelicals, because for the first time the percentage of evangelicals in the two-thirds world came to equal the number in the West. Within five years, the percentage changed to 66 percent in the two-thirds world and 34 percent in the West.

This shift in the center of gravity calls for a new partnership and empowerment in mission. It will test the mission motivation, commitment, and perspective of the Western church in an unprecedented way. It calls the Western church to be a partner in mission from a minority people and mission force perspective. Already two-thirds world Christians outnumber those in the Western church

and by 2000 their mission agencies and missionaries will exceed ours. Even though the West may still be a dominant economic force in world mission it raises many questions about how we view partnership. Will Western dollars support only Western missionaries? Will we support financially only what we control? Do missionized people and national conferences relate to the Western church on an indigenous basis or through our mission boards? Does partnership mean working together in global tasks through empowerment that comes from international teams, boards, and cooperation? Must the next phase of global mission not assume that the gospel will be carried by culturally blended mission teams, with Westerners in the minority?

### **Understanding spiritual warfare and empowerment in mission**

While I have always believed that the Holy Spirit's empowerment for mission was crucial for effectiveness, until recently the issue was a more academic and less practical reality. My earlier dispensational theology tended to reinforce a more conservative stance toward the Spirit's role in gifting, releasing, and empowering people for ministry. In the past decade I have concluded that among Western Christians, too many are "living on the right side of Calvary but the wrong side of Pentecost." The issue is not one of preoccupation with the sign gifts, miracles, dramatic healings, or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as an end in itself. It is an issue of spiritual preparation and empowerment for spiritual warfare.

My recent trip to Latin America brought me face to face with the reality that the fastest growing churches in Sao Paulo, Bogota, and Guadalajara are independent charismatic congregations. In Latin America the church is growing three times faster than the population. When I probed for reasons behind the growth of the independent, charismatic churches over other equally fundamental, evangelical mission agencies I was told, "The evangelicals believe in the Holy Spirit as a doctrine, but Pentecostals encounter the Holy Spirit as reality in their daily experience." Spiritist centers outnumber evangelical churches among Sao Paulo's seventeen million people by a ratio of five to one. The only hope for breaking this stronghold is the Spirit's empowerment for deliverance. For me it is no surprise that a more charismatically oriented theology and worship style attracts Brazilians. Brazilians are warm, emotive, expressive, and relational; their natural affinity is toward a charismatic theology and expression. Additionally, spiritism and the supernatural are a part of Brazilian culture and thinking. Since they connect day-to-day happenings with the miraculous and the supernatural in a spiritist culture, they also look for supernatural manifestations of God's power in Christianity.

In an interview with three Catholic priests in a base community, I asked what the charismatic renewal movement had done in the Roman Catholic Church. Their response was candid, "It has freed the church to become more Brazilian in showing warmth and emotion in our worship. It has brought new life and vitality to the church by emphasizing a greater openness to the gifts beyond the seven sacraments. It has brought a strong evangelization emphasis into the Catholic Church."

Obviously the Spirit does not only empower for mission. The Spirit gives the gifts of wisdom and discernment so that in the exercise of all gifts the church is edified, Christ is exalted, and the kingdom is extended. My point is that

mission in North America and in other parts of the world has not taken seriously enough the role of the Holy Spirit for empowerment. I have much to learn about the Spirit's role in intercession, spiritual warfare, and healing. The key lies in a greater openness to and expectancy of the Spirit's manifestation in ministry.

### **Leadership development as a priority in mission**

There were basically two reasons for my shift from being a full-time itinerant evangelist and part-time teacher to a reversal of those roles in the mid-70s. First was a growing recognition that mass evangelism as a primary strategy in North America was ineffective in reaching and incorporating new people into the church. Second was the realization that I needed to impact pastors and church leaders if the church was to be mobilized in mission. D. L. Moody said, "It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people." My singular focus at seminary has been to develop leaders with a heart for evangelism, a vision for mission, and a multiplication mind-set.

Over the years I have come to realize that church planting is the single most effective evangelistic strategy. The reasons are not difficult to discern. First, new churches start with a clear vision and commitment to reach new people. Second, statistical evidence for the ratio of conversions to membership is on the side of churches less than five years old rather than older established churches. Furthermore, new churches are usually more flexible, creative, and mobile in how they do church planting, and therefore reach population segments not being attracted by existing congregations. However, church planting without leadership development that is culturally indigenous will short-circuit church growth and multiplication. Perhaps the greatest contribution North Americans can make to the mushrooming two-thirds world church is to help with leadership training and development.

### **Training for mission that is life and ministry related**

If the primary role of North American missionaries is not only to plant churches but to serve as catalytic leaders and equippers of national workers, then our training institutions and models will also have to change. Since mission in the next decades will be more cross-cultural on every continent, then training must incorporate not only the Western, philosophical, rational, and theoretical base, but it must educate leaders in a life, ministry, and experiential base. Training must be formation, not only information. While all missionaries may not be seminary-trained, they must develop skills in personal formation, evangelism, church planting, discipling, holistic ministries, and cross-cultural communication. However, regardless of formal education, overseas mission ministry should be based on cross-cultural and leadership development experience in their sending church context. Missionaries cannot be expected to do overseas what they have not demonstrated, modeled, experienced, and tested at the sending base. Furthermore, if two billion people are unreached and unreachable through conventional missionaries, then we will need to train a whole new mission force that penetrates other countries, cultures, and religions through professional and more informal channels.

### **Developing diverse and flexible mission strategies**

It has been suggested that the dual temptation of the church in every generation is "to change its message or

to refuse to change its methods." With the shift from rural to urban and the breakdown of the "home" and "foreign" mission dichotomies, strategies must also change. It takes many different kinds of churches to reach different kinds of people. Good news must be contextualized in culturally appropriate ways to reach different peoples, even in the same city. Craig Ellison's call for greater flexibility on how we "do church" in the city is timely: "Our ministries will be ineffective if we cherish racial/ethnic composition, our order of worship, our meeting schedules, our style of music and preaching more than those who need the Savior but are kept out of the kingdom because we are unwilling to make changes that would draw them to Christ" (Ellison 1985:17). The church does not lack for opportunity in mission but it struggles with changing strategies to meet changing needs. There are at least four neglected people groups that will not be reached through traditional church styles and strategies: the different ethnic/cultural/language peoples; the poor and marginalized; the multifamily housing unit dwellers (condominiums, high-rises, government housing projects); and the "baby boomers" (people born between 1946 and 1964). Mission strategies in the next decades cannot be standardized and applied unilaterally. They will have to become more diverse and more focused on specific people groups if the church is "to win as many as possible" (1 Cor. 9:19).

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## African Exhibit Indicts Canadian Missionaries for Arrogance

WILLIAM J. SAMARIN

*The following article responds to an exhibition that has attracted considerable attention. It highlights the continuing tendentious treatment accorded missions in the public forum. In February and March 1990 the British Broadcasting Corporation televised a six-part series, "Missionaries," and published an illustrated book containing the complete text of the broadcast. It, too, was marked by an air of cynicism and condescension while telling the story in a highly selective manner. Reprinted by permission from Christian Week, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

While coalitions of persons of African ancestry have been demonstrating at the ROM (Royal Ontario Museum) in Toronto over what they consider the racist nature of the exhibit, "Into the Heart of Africa," Christians and missionary societies have been silent.

Many would be justified in being offended at the characterization of Canadian missionary work in Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The exhibit, which opened last November and continues until early August, claims to "celebrate the rich cultural heritage of African life," while asserting that Canadians in Africa misunderstood and denigrated African culture and African worldviews.

Missionaries are the chief objects of criticism, denounced for their "paternalism and cultural arrogance." Many of the objects on display were donations by missionaries and missionary societies serving in Nigeria, Zaire, and Angola, such as Thomas Titcombe, Joseph Blakeney, and Walter T. Currie. The focus is entirely on Protestants.

### Overblown

These artifacts, curator Jeanne Cannizzo claims, "often reveal almost as much about the missionary worldview as

*Dr. William J. Samarin, professor of Linguistic Anthropology at the University of Toronto, is author of The Black Man's Burden: African Colonial Labor on the Congo and Ubangi Rivers 1880-1900 (1989).*

they do about African beliefs and cultural practices"—an overblown statement unless it means only that Protestants believed that Africans lived in paganism from which they had to be saved.

Although conversion to Christianity is recognized as the chief goal of missionary work, it also sought, the exhibit claims, to civilize Africans by replacing their traditional customs and material culture with European ones, like eating with fork and spoon and living in square houses. Missionaries were motivated by a "sense of cultural superiority."

The exhibit, poorly documented from missionary publications and archives, is specious for its stereotypical view of Christian missions, and it is guilty of making wrong interpretations, blatant contradictions, and frequent speculations in support of its propaganda.

A photograph of a group of women at Chisamba, Angola, in 1895, shows some of them in the "sort of dress preferred by missionaries" although European cloth was a trade item that Africans were enthusiastic about, and the blouse that only one woman wears above a wrap-around skirt in the native manner might have been a gift in payment for food brought by the woman.

The caption also claims that Africans were taught to cultivate bananas, as if they had known nothing about this staple. Even if bananas were new to the area, they may have been introduced to the mission village to improve the people's diet.

Square houses and outdoor hearths, it goes on to say, "might be further 'improvements' suggested by Canadian missionaries," ignoring the fact that cooking outdoors was traditional before Europeans arrived and Angola had been colonized by the Portuguese since the 15th century.

A photograph of Mrs. Thomas Titcombe "offering a lesson in how to wash clothes" to Yagba women in northern Nigeria about 1915, implies that African women had to be taught cleanliness, and ignores the possibility that these were mission station employees, part or full time, who

were being taught to do the task in a certain manner. Soap was probably introduced to Africa by the Portuguese at the same time that European fabrics were.

### **Kinship ties**

Changes supposedly introduced by missionaries are described as "profoundly disruptive," such as the houses that were meant for nuclear families, in spite of the fact that it was the Portuguese who encouraged the construction of such houses by not taxing them, as they did the traditional kind of African dwelling.

If the missionaries had anything to do with guiding the members of the mission community, they were undoubtedly helping the people to avoid the repressive ordinances issued by the colonial government.

In any case, anybody with any experience in Africa knows that African family life, with differences between rural and urban settings, still depends on the kinship system.

While the exhibit depicts missionaries as arrogant colonialists, interested in portraying Africans in the worst possible light, so as to raise funds for their missions, the curator, whom one journalist has called an anthropologist, seems puzzled by the beautiful objects that missionaries also brought back. Rev. Currie collected dozens of beautiful baskets and both combs and hairpins of fine craftsmanship and design, and Rev. T. Hope Morgan brought back exquisite Kuba textiles.

Curator Cannizzo ignores the fact that Canadian missionaries were quite as capable as others of appreciating indigenous art.

Although slave shackles and whips are displayed, little is made of the role that missionaries played in abolishing slavery. Indeed, rather than commanding missionaries for their humanitarianism, they are said to have sought an end to the slave trade only to replace it with "legitimate commerce."

Missionaries in the first decade of this century contributed greatly to the condemnation of the barbarous treatment of Africans in the Congo Free State where they were forced to collect wild rubber, as archives of the Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York, make clear for what is now Zaire.

### **Uninformed and biased**

So naive, uninformed, and biased is the exhibit that in commenting on the weapons in the exhibit (spears, throwing knives, and the like), it depicts Africans as having been relatively unwarlike and non-expansionist. It portrays a romantic Africa, where pastoralists defended their herds from human and animal predators and farmers protected the family fields.

Nineteenth century accounts of central Africa report raids and skirmishes of terrible savagery, when bodies would be mutilated. (They lived, of course, before the wars that 'civilized' human beings conducted in this century, equally, if not more, savage.)

It was generally believed, by Europeans (although I

have yet to find a Protestant missionary sharing this view) that Africans indulged in cannibalism, although the extent of it and the reasons for it, if true at all, are matters that scholars are still debating.

Missionaries, as all human beings, are not entirely free of the worldviews that characterize their societies and cultures. For that reason they have made mistakes. In the 15th and 16th centuries the Portuguese brought African slaves to Portugal sincerely believing in some cases that they were assuring them of a better life and a better future life as Christians.

Many missionaries in recent years, both Catholic and Protestant, have been very much aware of the possible consequences of the work they undertake. They have sought to minimize the far-reaching effects of cultural change, and tried to protect, as much as anthropologists try to, from exploitation by powerful landowners.

Missionaries have not always and everywhere obliged people to wear more clothing. Jack E. Phillips, director of SIM (formerly Sudan Interior Mission, founded in Canada), a missionary for 20 years in Nigeria, says that it was Nigerian Christians who insisted that Christians dress up, criticizing missionaries for keeping their people in a "backward," that is, non-European, state.

One group of missionaries in Chad, while insisting, on doctrinal grounds, that women cover their heads in church (which they did with a gourd), allowed both men and women to come stark naked, as was their habit at that time.

### **Low esteem**

There is no doubt that throughout the history of the West, people of other lands, once called "primitives," were held in low esteem. A feeling of cultural superiority is, of course, not limited to Christians.

By the time the exhibit leaves Toronto, at least 40,000 people will have viewed the objects, read the comments and possibly bought the catalog. This unbalanced exhibit, which is an injustice to the missionaries who gave the objects in good faith, will be seen next at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Ottawa-Hull), the Vancouver Museum, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, and the Albuquerque Museum.

After this tour of North America a million persons or more will have been exposed to a journalistic, simplistic, and biased presentation of missions in Africa.

Christians have as much right to share their beliefs with others as Marxists do, but in doing so they have over the centuries made many mistakes. Literature that makes all missionaries heroic saints denies what is evident to all but the most naive: missionaries are just people.

Critical analyses of missions, as well as the imperialism of Islam, are necessary for getting at the truth of history and human behavior. It is deplorable, nonetheless, that a public institution should exploit what should be a tribute to Africans as an opportunity to reinforce the stereotype of the missionary as an ethnocentric, bigoted, and insensitive person.

## In Review

**Theology, Politics, and Peace.** Edited by Theodore Runyon. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989, 199 pp., \$16.95.

Reviewed by Abe Dueck

This volume brings together lectures of a variety of politicians and theologians who met for a conference at the Carter Center of Emory University in 1988. Part I provides the political perspectives of politicians from three continents—Europe, Latin America, and North America—with the keynote address by Jimmy Carter.

Part II has a parallel theological division, with lectures by Juergen Moltmann, representing the European theology of hope; Jose Miguez Bonino, representing the Latin American liberation theology perspective; and Theodore R. Weber, representing the North American Christian realist perspective.

Part III, entitled "Other Voices," enhances the dialogue with relatively brief essays by twelve other politicians and theologians, including such notables as Andrew Young and John Howard Yoder.

While the perspectives offered are often in stark opposition to each other, the book reveals a common deep sense of urgency of the pursuit of peace in a global context where theological and religious views are so diverse. As Moltmann contends, ours is the first common age of all people because of the threat of nuclear armaments. But even when the threat of nuclear annihilation subsides temporarily, as it may have, the truth is nevertheless that the issues of social and economic injustice are global issues which threaten the peace of everyone.

Runyon provides a helpful introductory essay which summarizes the points of agreement and disagreement between the various contributors. The main points of consensus include the fact that an increase in political, economic, and ecological justice are essential to stable peace, and that mutual security and mutual self-interest must be recognized to achieve peace.

The essays are an encouraging sign that theologians and politicians are beginning to see the need for increased dialogue if there is to be any hope for the future. It is unfortunate that, except in a few cases, there is little sense of direct dialogue between the participants at the conference—the essays stand in relative isolation from each other.

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**Faith Sharing.** By H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris. Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1986, 131 pp., \$7.95 (pb)

Reviewed by James Nikkel

This is a pleasant change from many "how-to" books on witness and faith sharing. The book is written against the backdrop of the church growth movement and uses both theory and practice of that approach.

The authors attempt to turn non-growing churches back to a faith-sharing situation. They define faith sharing as one distinguishing characteristic of a Bible-believing church, lay out the theological motive and understanding for faith sharing, effectively describe it as the central theme of Scripture with God as initiator, and claim that only faith sharing assures constant infusion of new Christians into the fellowship, thereby keeping alive the spiritual vitality and growth of the body of Christ.

The writers analyze the various misconceptions and barriers of faith in order to move from merely having a belief system or dogma to a living practicing faith. The book attempts to bring clarity to faulty images of faith acceptance and sharing.

By definition, this book follows a proclamation rather than a harvest theology, thus removing fret over results. The authors make a strong case for the gospel being both visible and verbal, working and waiting. The book maintains a good balance of practical guidance and theological reflection. It can be used for small group or personal witness orientation and should be read by every pastor.

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**World Christians: Eastern Europe.** Edited by Philip Walters. Monrovia, CA: MARC International, 1988, 313 pp., \$15.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Hans Kasdorf

Here, for the first time in history, is an updated source of information on the state of Christianity in nine Eastern European countries, including about 90 pages on the Soviet Union. Philip Walters, the editor, is Director of Research at Keston College, a globally recognized center for objective reporting on the church in the Soviet Union and—until recent times—her East-

ern European communist allies.

Following the foreword by Keston College founder Michael Bourdeaux and a six-page introduction by the editor, the book gives a panoramic overview of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. The book concludes with notes and "A Few Words About Keston College."

Varying in detail and length of description, each chapter offers a profile of the country in terms of geography, people, history, economy, social conditions, and political life. Following this contextual information is one section on "The Status of Christianity," one on "The Various Churches and Denominations" (even the Mennonites are mentioned, pp. 86-87), and one on "Christian Activities." This last part includes such aspects as evangelism and mission; broadcasting; literature production and distribution (official and unofficial); Bible translation and availability (or the need for Bibles); education of adults, youth, and children; social concerns of the church, and more.

I have four observations: first, while the book is packed with information, it maintains a consistent readable style without creating the impression of a demographic data bank. Second, the reader is also reminded of the rapid changes which have taken place since the terms *glasnost* and *perestroika* have become watchwords of international significance. Third, one must also remember that the bulk of material for this book was compiled before much of the communism ideology had collapsed, governments had fallen, and the "great wall" had crumbled. Finally, anyone concerned about the church and its mission in Eastern Europe will find here a source of information that will inspire and motivate to participation in the missionary challenge of today.

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*The Puzzle of the Soviet Church: An Inside Look at Christianity and Glasnost.* By Kent R. Hill. Portland: Multnomah, 1989, 417 pp., \$14.95.

Reviewed by Hans Kasdorf

The subtitle is misleading. While the author was a player on stage in the freeing of the "Siberian Seven," and while he is certainly knowledgeable about the Soviet scene, he can hardly claim to give an "inside look"; he simply looks in.

Ever since the terms *glasnost* and *perestroika* became watchwords in many languages of the free world, the church in the Soviet Union may still be a "puzzle," as Hill contends, but it is no longer a mystery. Just as the Berlin Wall has crumbled, so the Iron Curtain has been lifted and the long silence about the church is broken.

But that does not alter the value of the book. Already in the 1970s we saw an increasing number of books, monographs, and articles appear in the West about Christian fate and faith under Soviet totalitarianism. The focus was largely on the suffering church. And that was justified. But when Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as a true insider wrote *The Gulag Archipelago* (I and II), a new genre in church history began to appear: scientific, documented accounts. Walter Sawatzky's *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Herald, 1981) paved the way and is by now a "classic."

During the last five years dozens of books have appeared in Russian, French, German, and English. All are telling the story of the church in different aspects and from different perspectives; they speak of its trials and its triumph. The book under review is another attempt to tell that story. Several observations are in place.

1. Hill's delineation of the political context is commendable. He takes the reader into the arena of conflict between belief and unbelief; it is a struggle between life and death.

2. The historical account is well documented. This applies particularly to section three describing the "Church and State" from 1917 to 1985. Hill correctly identifies the first twelve years after the Revolution as the "Golden Age" for the evangelicals and the 1929/39 decade as the "Nightmare Years."

3. The section on "Western Responses to Christians in the USSR" is well done. While the first part reinforces Walter Sawatzky's contention that the World Council of Churches was politically biased in support of the Soviet measures against the church, the second part goes beyond

Sawatzky by updating the record and by pointing to "Prospects for More Responsible Policies."

4. Hill's case study of the "Siberian Seven" reads almost like a mystery novel. It is a story of the seven Pentecostals who by choice lived for five years in the "prison" of the American embassy in Moscow. Hill's assessment of the American response is less than complimentary.

5. One can also appreciate the author's cautious response to the legend that Gorbachev may be a "secret believer." Even if he "is neither a secret believer nor a King Cyrus, it is still possible that *perestroika* and *glasnost* may unleash forces able to challenge the grip of atheism on the ideology of the ruling party of the Soviet Union. That, in any event, must be the prayer of the religious communities" (p. 331).

The appendices, an up-to-date bibliography, and a useful index help to make the book a comprehensive source of information on the larger church and its mission in the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

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*Hans Kasdorf is professor of World Mission at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California.*

***Mission Impossible: The Unreached Nosu on China's Frontier.*** By Ralph Covell. Pasadena, CA: Hope Publishing House, 1990, 309 pp., \$10.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Dale Taylor

Ralph Covell's *Mission Impossible* recounts the story of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society work from 1946 to 1951 in southwest China. The Nosu are a non-Chinese people, also known as Yi, Yizu, and Lolo. The book is primarily "for the record"; it is the group biography of the mission team of which the Covells were members. Readers who are interested in broader issues concerning China and mission would prefer Covell's 1986 title, *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ: A History of the Gospel in Chinese*.

Covell does not quite develop an argument in this record; rather, he regularly hints toward some themes, by now well established in other interpretations, concerning the errors of many foreign mission ventures in China, the innocent high-handedness and cultural misunderstanding

from which deportation and distance have released us. The tone is factual and forgiving: the mission was "impossible" not because of wrong missionary methods, but because of the raging of the nations, which the mission programs should perhaps have tried to understand.

When Ralph Covell sailed to China in 1946, with 669 other American missionaries, he thought that "the war" was over. However, China's war, which had begun in 1933, continued as civil war until the Guomindang fled China and established a government in Taiwan, late in 1949. Then in June 1950, China and the United Nations began actions in Korea. By the time American missionaries in China realized that China was at war, the war was against the United States. This, then, was the cause of the gradual but strongly encouraged, if not enforced, exodus of foreign missionaries from China in 1951.

The church in China survived without missionaries, even during the persecutions of 1966-76. The Covells report on the basis of recent visits to their former home that the Chinese churches in the cities of the Jianchang Valley remain faithful, and that the Nosu higher in the mountains are still unreached.

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*Dale Taylor lives in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

***The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today.*** Edited by Dean S. Gilliland. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1989, 344 pp., \$19.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Jerry Truex

Contextualization, as both concept and mission strategy, is fraught with difficulty, danger, and controversy. Yet for Christians seeking to understand and appropriate the eternal Word in every particular situation, contextualization becomes the inevitable path of discipleship and the necessary means of evangelization. This conviction dominates and unifies *The Word Among Us*, a volume containing contributions from twelve faculty of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. The book presents six chapters which address theoretical issues and eight which aim at application.

Theoretically, the authors believe that contextualization is biblical, supremely an-

chored by incarnational theology (Gilliland). The Old Testament demonstrates that, although transcending culture, God chose to reveal himself through various cultural mediums (Glasser). Similarly, the New Testament utilizes diverse symbols and local expressions relevant to each context, yet it presents a coherent message (Gilliland). Thus, the "discontinuous continuity" of the covenant displays a model for contextualization today (Van Engen). What is called for is both a "critical contextualization," where cultural form and meaning are distinguished yet critically related (Hiebert), and a "receptor-oriented" approach, where the deepest human needs are met through word and life (Kraft).

Application involves "transculturation" of the message (Shaw), utilization of strategically assessed methods of communication (Sogaard), employment of leadership models which fit receptor cultures (Clinton), and social transformation through pertinent relational goals (Elliston). North American (Wagner), Chinese (Che-Bin), and Muslim (Woodberry) receptor cultures are specifically addressed as well as the problem of Christian "nominality" (Gibbs). Finally, an appendix compares seven models of contextualization of which the "critical model" is affirmed.

Although each of the authors displays various degrees of enthusiasm and critical assessment, the book has an apologetic tone. A full chapter addressing the risks of contextualization would have brought greater balance. Nevertheless, the authors may be commended for presenting complex issues for the nonspecialist and for continually citing and drawing upon their broad experiences to demonstrate that God communicates with people where they are. The book contains ample footnotes, a full bibliography, and would be suitable as a college text.

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*Jerry Truex is a third-year student at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California.*

***Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church.*** By Howard A. Snyder. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989, 336 pp., \$14.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Walter Unger**

With the current plethora of plans to renew the church and evangelize the world by the year 2000 comes a very insightful book by Howard Snyder on how God renews the church and rekindles within it a sense of mission. God's goal, affirms Snyder, is not just to renew the church, but to reconcile the world.

The Montanist, Pietist, Moravian, and Methodist movements are analyzed as models of church renewal. In a key chapter entitled "Dynamics of Renewal Movements," Snyder notes that the four movements were interwoven as part of a larger renewal flowing through the 17th and 18th centuries. All four made use of small cell groups and all made provisions for some practical expression of the priesthood of believers. Education and educational institutions played a key role in all four renewal movements. The Scriptures were stressed as being normative in the life and experience of the believer, and the early church was seen as the model of what church life should be.

At numerous points the author compares the four movements with the believers church model, and also devotes a significant section to the Catholic Anabaptist typology (pp. 54-61).

Each of these movements owed much of its dynamic to the key leaders who shaped them. Snyder concludes that "renewal movements are neither direct, irresistible acts of God nor the mere outworking of inexorable sociological laws or constraints. Much depends on human wisdom and choice. Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf, and Wesley all intended to see renewal come to the church and worked self-consciously to achieve it. The impact of the movements they led was due in large measure to the quality of the leadership they provided."

The final three chapters of the book present a model for renewal in our time, various dimensions of renewal (ranging from personal to missiological renewal), and a final word on a renewal strategy for the local church—all of which makes this insightful reading for pastors, missionaries,

and lay leaders interested in renewal.

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*Walter Unger is president of Columbia Bible College, Clearbrook, British Columbia.*

***New Creation Book for Muslims.*** By Phil Goble and Salim Munayer. Pasadena, CA: Mandate Press, 1989, 175 pp., \$7.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Timothy Bergdahl**

Phil Goble and Salim Munayer are cross-cultural ministers who recognize limitations in traditional evangelical approaches to Muslims. They propose a radically contextualized gospel, offering opportunities for Muslims to become "new creations" in Christ without requiring behavior abhorrent to family, community, or culture.

Quotations taken from Bible and Koran have been shaped into an exposition of the gospel and its implications for discipleship. Specific suggestions are offered regarding worship according to traditional Muslim patterns.

Contextualization is a vital concept for evangelism among Muslims, but I struggled with some aspects of this particular approach. Are Christians in a better position to interpret the Koran than Muslims? I don't think so, and I doubt that the selective paraphrasing of Koranic passages by the authors would impress knowledgeable Muslims.

Also, what is the value of being a "new creation" Muslim? Can one be a "completed Muslim," in the sense that a Jewish believer is said to be a "completed Jew"? Can one claim to be a Muslim without giving authority to all of the Koran, the hadith, and the interpretation of the ulama? I wonder whether God has prepared Islam to be used in the way the authors intend.

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*Timothy Bergdahl, currently studying at Fuller Theological Seminary, is employed by Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in Hillsboro, Kansas.*

**A Guide to Christian Churches in the Middle East.** By Norman A. Horner. Elkhart, IN: Mission Focus, 1989, 127 pp., \$5.00 (pb)

Reviewed by Harry Heubner

This is one of the most delightful booklets about the church in the Middle East I have read. Having worked out of the MCC (West Bank) office for two years (1981-1983) and having visited many of the church offices in the Middle East, I find the vast statistical information and the succinctness with which it is all presented to be very helpful. During my time in the Middle East I worked through A. J. Arberry's monumental two-volume work, *Religion in the Middle East*. Horner's guide is a condensed version and updating of Arberry's study of Christianity.

Horner summarizes the theological/historical background as well as the sociological character of the following major church groupings: Eastern (Chalcedonian) Orthodox, Assyrian ("Nestorian") Church of the East, Oriental (non-Chalcedonian) Orthodox churches, Eastern-rite Catholic churches, Latin-rite Catholic Church, Anglican Church, and Protestant churches. In each case he presents a sketch of the form these churches take from Morocco in the west to Muscat and Oman in the east, and from Turkey in the north to Sudan and Ethiopia in the south. He ends his study with some insightful reflections on the impact of the regional turmoil on the churches. Included also are two appendices detailing the Christian constituencies in the regions, one according to churches and the other according to countries.

This is a most valuable booklet. It is must reading for every foreign Christian working in this vast region. But it is not the kind of book you can read once and put away. It is a reference book which should be consulted regularly.

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Harry Heubner is professor of philosophy and theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

**Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective.** By C. Norman Kraus. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987, 263 pp., \$19.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Tim Geddert

According to Kraus the Bible, being an Asian book, is understood most clearly and interpreted most faithfully when examined through Asian cultural/religious/philosophical "glasses." Western theologians who aim to be faithful to the post-biblical "orthodox creeds" inevitably distort its message. They focus too heavily on rational analyses of Christ's being and on logical analyses of his atoning work.

Kraus attempts to write from an Asian (and yet Anabaptist) perspective. His Christology focuses heavily on revelational and relational aspects of Christ's person and work. We are saved through solidarity with Christ, not by appropriating a substitutionary atonement.

Kraus' approach is to critique and/or bypass the early creeds, and challenge many of the basic conclusions and/or assumptions of modern Western theology.

I feel the results are mixed. There are some fresh insights on how certain New Testament texts should be interpreted. There is a helpful discussion on the importance of viewing Christ's person and work in more personal than ontological terms. There are valuable insights on how the message of the cross addresses "shame" cultures as opposed to "guilt" cultures.

But in the process Kraus denies, reinterprets, or minimizes some fundamental Christian doctrines, calling them post-biblical distortions. Many theologians have substantially denied the empirical reality of Christ's preexistence and virgin birth, eliminated "Trinitarian" language in discussing God, virtually ignored the Holy Spirit, and attempted to present a theology of atonement which eliminates "substitution" categories. But few have jettisoned and/or minimized these biblical doctrines while claiming to be uncovering the real intentions of the biblical writers, as Kraus does.

It is essential that Western theologians allow non-Western perspectives to shape the way the gospel is interpreted and presented. But this process need not require as much reshaping of orthodox Christian faith as Kraus suggests.

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**Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists.** By Philip M. Steyne. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1989, 272 pp., (pb)

Reviewed by Paul G. Hiebert

In this book, Philip Steyne examines an important topic in contemporary mission and in the West—the worldview, beliefs, and practices of folk religions. Steyne draws upon his experiences as a missionary to South Africa and now as professor of missions at Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions to analyze these religions phenomenologically and provide a Christian response.

Steyne draws heavily upon Alan Tippett, his mentor in doctoral studies, and presents basically a taxonomic approach to the subject. He examines the foundations of animistic religions: their views of spirits and mana, and their focus on power and control. He then discusses specific beliefs such as the animistic views of human nature, life force and ancestors, and specific practices such as magic, witchcraft, dreams, divination, and ordeals. He then looks at types of ritual specialists. In all of this, he points out how the people understand and see the world.

The insights are helpful. What is needed is an examination of the basic human desires, needs, and questions which underlie these beliefs and behaviors and lead people to believe and act in these ways. If we do not look below specific religious expressions, we are in danger of reacting only to surface manifestations, and of not providing Christian answers to the deeper longings of people's hearts.

Steyne provides a good initial Christian response to animistic beliefs and practices. Much more needs to be done along this line, or Christianity will be seen only as a superior magic or cargo religion providing people with greater powers and blessings, rather than as a new gospel that challenges both the old animistic and the modern secular worldviews. Steyne's book is a good introduction to a subject not only for missionaries, but also for those working in the post-modern West with its neopaganisms, New Age, eastern cults, and focus on self and power.

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Paul G. Hiebert is professor in the School for World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary in Fresno, California.

## Editorial

In 1987 in *Mission Focus* we began a series of articles on the theme: "How my understanding of mission has developed." A dozen contributions, including Henry Schmidt's in this issue, have appeared. Two other articles have also contributed to this reflection—Robert Ramseyer's in the June 1990 issue, and Albert Buckwalter's in December 1987. It seems worthwhile to summarize and underscore some of the notes that have been sounded by people who have been involved in mission in a variety of ways over a long span of time on several continents.

The missionary vocation requires that the missionary be able to live with a tension. The one pole consists of commitment to Jesus Christ and unswerving loyalty to the gospel. The other pole is comprised of commitment to the people of another culture. Such commitment demands identification with them, symbolized by their deepest aspirations. Most of us have to learn how to live with this tension. We set out on this cross-cultural—but not necessarily international—pilgrimage more clearly aware of one pole or the other. Albert Buckwalter's experience is a particularly compelling example of transformation of a missionary's worldview as the prior condition for genuine encounter.

What we sometimes overlook is that the experience of this tension is not unique to the missionary as outsider. Both Takio Tanase and Milka Rindzinski commented on the ways their own worldviews were affected by encounter with the missionary "outsider." The result was to make them less conformed to their culture at crucial points precisely because they had embraced the "Christ" pole and underwent a restructuring of their worldview.

In light of this, Frances Hiebert's counsel that we not concede too much to contextualization takes on added cogency. An uninhibited emphasis on context can cause us to lose sight of that which alone can transcend and redeem culture.

A note that is sounded repeatedly is the extent to which we find ourselves in the role of learner. We may have gone to preach, teach, and heal, but we have repeatedly heard the good news with fresh power and experienced a new degree of wholeness through the faith of those to whom we have gone. This calls forth a sense of gratitude, as when Alle Hoekema tells of the way the Indonesian churches became his tutor, teaching lessons that opened up entirely new vistas of faith. Albert Buckwalter reported how they "have been profoundly changed by the Indians' response to the Scripture message." Response begets response; learning takes place as we join together in a common pilgrimage to "the city of our God."

In addition to being willing to learn from others, we can learn better teaching methods. In a particularly compelling passage Miriam Krantz tells how she was driven to observe life-patterns and listen to the villagers she so

much wished to help. "I did this by visiting and observing village families for one year until I could ask questions in ways that the villagers could come up with possible solutions themselves." As a kind of footnote, she adds: "I am reminded how often Jesus used questions to involve people in their own healing and growth in understanding."

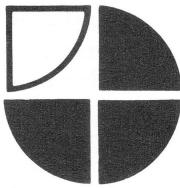
Gerald Stucky sounded a note that has been a recurring theme—the importance of the Bible. Delbert and Frieda Erb continue to be concerned that the needs of lay people be met through training programs suited to their level. They call for priority attention to "base inductive Bible teaching." The meaning of the biblical message is deepened and broadened through common experience and study. To see that message, as portrayed in the Bible, become a transforming power in the lives of the barrio-dwellers of Buenos Aires—or any other major metropolis—and the rural poor of Bolivia, is to find oneself caught up in the drama of redemptive history. Jose Gallardo conveys the urgency and compassion he has felt for society's cast-offs growing out of his own biblical and theological studies and his experience of being an evangelist.

Leo Laurence and Arthur Climenhaga can view the fundamental changes that have come in the relationship between mission and church in the past generation as the result of moving from one historical era to another. Glenn and Lois Musselman have remained involved over a period of more than thirty-five years with the church they helped to found, by flexibly moving from one role to another, first under mission direction and then under the church's decision. Takio Tanase applauds such "Abrahamic" mobility as the essence of mission.

Not only is the missionary called to move from one culture to another but to mediate between historical periods of the Christian tradition. Robert Ramseyer reflects on his attempts to draw inspiration and insight from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement as he has worked out his missionary vocation in Japan. Milka Rindzinski testifies to the attraction of this vision of the gospel in helping her decide to identify with the Mennonite Church in Uruguay where she has made a strong contribution as a leader and trainer of others.

As Henry Schmidt puts it, his own development has been "full of surprises." This sentiment is shared by most of those who have written of their pilgrimages. By definition a pilgrimage involves responding to a call without having a detailed itinerary in hand at the outset. It is the one who calls who also provides the "surprises" along the way. Most surprising of all is looking back on the journey and discovering that all the disparate parts have connected up and a pattern has emerged.

—Wilbert R. Shenk



## The Missionary and Music

ALBERT W. D. FRIESEN

Music plays an important role in almost every cultural setting in the world. Missionaries work alongside national Christians in these settings, sharing the good news and working to make that news understood and accepted by persons within those cultures. An important step in helping the gospel become an indigenous part of the religious experience is the use of music. Many missionaries have insufficient musical and ethnomusicological training to be helpful in the development of indigenous Christian music. By assisting the indigenous culture to analyze or evaluate its own musical culture, missionaries can encourage national Christians to create their own type of biblical sacred music for worship, fellowship, teaching, and evangelism.

The purpose of this article is, first, to make a chronological survey of the main resources available on the development of thought on indigenous hymnody and the actual development of this hymnody. Second, it attempts to shed light on the methodology of hymn writing so that missionaries can encourage the creation of another culture's indigenous music for Christian worship.

### Chronology of indigenous hymnody

Asian missionaries seemed to be aware of the need for indigenous Christian music before missionaries in other continents. An article published in the *Encyclopedia of Missions* (Bliss 1891:151-55) listed hymnals of India, Turkey, and Persia, in use from 1853 to 1889, which used indigenous music.

H. A. Popley discussed India's music in his excellent article "The Musical Heritage of India" (Popley 1920:200-213; 1921a:223-35). He deplored missionaries' unwillingness to learn from India's culture and to "Indianize" Christianity. Popley emphasized his conviction that only purely Indian music should be sung, and no attempts at a hybrid of Indian and Western styles should be made, since these broke almost every law of Indian music. His book, *The Music of India* (1921b) provided an important step in understanding and using Indian music in the church.

From the 1950s to today, much more has been written about Christian expressions of worship in other cultures. Rolla Foley's book *Song of the Arab* (1953) included Christian folk songs from the Holy Land as sung by Arabs. Foley recognized that a lack of appreciation of the

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indigenous music so important to the Arabs had disastrously limited the use of native music in the church.

A book similar to Popley's is Emmons E. White's *Appreciating India's Music* (1957). Two chapters on music in evangelism and music in the church updated what was being done to utilize Indian music in Christianity. White suggested some progressive and positive methods by which church music could be improved.

A book still of relevance for missionaries today is Henry Weman's *African Music and the Church in Africa* (1960). It was important, not in its generalizations about African music, but in its suggestions to missionaries on how to use African music in the church. Alan P. Merriam (1963:134-37) stated in his review of the book that it would be important to ethnomusicologists of the future as a basic document for planned change in African music. Merriam also suggested that studies should be done in specific areas of Africa, since Weman's generalizations were not very accurate. In the intervening years, many good studies have become available, describing not how to develop such music, but rather how it actually happened in many cultural, historic settings.

An important article by J. H. Kwabena Nketia entitled "The Contribution of African Culture to Christian Worship" (Nketia 1962) gives a brief but good analysis of the characteristics of African languages and of music which should be used in the church to make worship relevant to the African.

The November-December 1962 issue of *Practical Anthropology* was devoted to the subject of "Music, Church, and Ethnocentrism," including an editorial by William Smalley (1962:272-73). In the same issue, Mary Key, in "Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes" (1962:257-62), researched the meaning of music in different societies, its cultural setting, and its function.

Another article on African music from this issue of *Practical Anthropology* is "Indigenous Hymnody of Ivory Coast" by Louis L. King (1962:268-70). King discussed the spontaneous development, without appreciable missionary stimulation, of local musical traditions for Christian worship and witness. The fact that missionaries had little to do with this development is significant.

An excellent in-depth study of Chinese music was written by David Sheng (1964) in "A Study of the Indigenous Elements in Chinese Christian Hymnody." Sheng researched the effect Chinese nationalism had on the writing of hymns, from the Nestorian hymns of the Tang Dynasty to the *Hymns of Universal Praise* published

in 1936. He noted that Chinese Christianity was influenced by the "Three Religions"—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—and gave examples of these influences in Chinese hymns which displayed a fusion of oriental and occidental cultures. He came to the same conclusion many had before him: a greater use of native tunes for Christian praise, traditional or original, is necessary.

Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen's study, *The Theology of a South African Messiah: An Analysis of the Hymnal of "The Church of the Nazarites"* (1967) is a major step beyond the study of style to the study of content. This implies an acceptance of hymns as part of the organizational establishment. The hymns are not mere experiments of cultural expression in worship, but are the catechism of the Nazarite movement.

Another helpful article from *Practical Anthropology* is entitled "On Ethnic Music" written by Vida Chenoweth and Darlene Bee (1968:205-12). The authors discuss some important guidelines in approaching the oral musical tradition of another culture and some dangers of introducing Western hymns to these cultures, stating that indigenous composers should be encouraged to write hymns. An interesting concept of indigenous hymn writing comes from New Guinea, where some nationals "dreamed" songs which were quite acceptable in Christian worship.

Dorothy James, in her article "Toward an Ethnic Hymnody" (1969:34-38), mentions that discerning indigenous Christians are the best judges of what types of music from their own culture could be used in ethnic hymnody. This seems to have been the first recorded indication that outsiders should not be the judges of what was musically acceptable for worship.

Two other specific studies are Isaiah Mapoma's article "The Use of Folk Music Among Some Bemba Church Congregations in Zambia" (1971:72-88), and Lazarus Ekwueme's "African Music in Christian Liturgy: The Igbo Experiment" (1973:12-33). The latter article, in addition to stating some problems of relating a tonal language to Western music, mentions some of the experiments taking place during the special seasons of the Christian church, and lists a number of musicians with examples of their songs.

A significant development in the use of Christian indigenous music was the employment of native Christians who were musical experts to teach indigenous music to Western missionaries and their children. Robert Granner (1973:6-11) relates that a school for missionary children developed a program for occidental students to help them gain a proper understanding of Indian music. The instructor was an Indian Christian who had studied at the Annamalai University in Chidambaram near Madras and who was the first Christian in South India to obtain the title of "Sangita Bhushanam," which means "an ornament of music." This reveals progress in efforts toward integrating indigenous music and Christian truths and worship.

Descriptive articles and dissertations have been written in recent years which describe the history of the hymn development, the processes of hymn creation, and hymn content and use. Included in these is James Krabill's dissertation, "The Hymnody of the Harrist Church Among the Dida of South-Central Ivory Coast (1913-1949): An Historico-Religious Study" (1989) and his published article "Dida Harrist Hymnody (1913-1990)" (1990:118-52). The latter appears in the June 1990 *Journal of Religion in Africa* along with three other articles on the development of African hymnody. Another dissertation on African

music by Roberta King, not available for this article, has been completed at the Fuller School of World Mission.

### Methodology of hymn writing

A final word needs to be written about specific attempts at establishing a methodology of writing hymns. The article "How One Tribe Got Its Own Music" by Morgan W. Jones, Jr. (1975:38-40), describes a three-stage process by which the Trio Indians of Surinam developed their own hymnody. In the first stage, missionaries wrote songs in the indigenous language and set these lyrics to simple Western tunes which the Trios adapted to fit their minor, pentatonic scales. In the second stage, the Trios started to write their own lyrics for these adapted tunes. And in

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**MISSION FOCUS** (ISSN 0164-4696) is published quarterly at 500 S. Main St., Elkhart, Indiana, by Mennonite Board of Missions. Single copies available without charge. Send correspondence to Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370. Second-class postage paid at Elkhart, Indiana, and at additional mailing offices. Lithographed in USA. Copyright 1990 by Mennonite Board of Missions. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MISSION FOCUS, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370.

the third stage, the Trios composed both lyrics and music.

The second article is Vida Chenoweth's "Spare Them Western Music" (1984:30-35). Principles are presented which will encourage all workers in a cross-cultural situation to be catalysts for indigenous music. Interestingly, no encouragement is given for artificial creation sessions:

Some of our number are trying to hurry this process by means of workshops during which time nationals are expected to produce Christian songs on demand.... A workshop—in the sense that a group meets in order to produce a repertoire on demand—can be superficial both spiritually and musically.... A couple of dangers inherent in the workshop method have been observed: The participant quickly adjusts some new text to a traditional melody (and is sometimes laughed down because of the lingering connotations of the melody) or, in some cases, the participant sweats with frustration and embarrassment, unable to fulfill the request" (Chenoweth 1984:30).

The final attempt, "A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody" (1982:83-96), is my own, and is excerpted from my thesis of the same title (1981). Both outline a two-part, eight-step approach, providing guidelines for the musical and nonmusical missionary who wants to promote indigenous musical culture. Part I introduces song types, instruments, singers and instrumentalists, and technical characteristics. Part II consists of the psychological ramifications of the first part: song type evaluation, instrumental evaluation, the use of existing melodies and composition of new melodies, and testing. Finally, five missiological principles to help focus the methodology are presented:

1. An analysis of the indigenous music system is necessary in order to develop an intelligible, theological, and cultural hymnody for the church.

2. Continuity of culture is vital to a smooth transition and thus an indigenous development of Christianity.

3. The missionary's role is one of catalyst/trainer/performer.

4. The discerning indigenous Christians are the best judges and thus should be the final arbitrators of what is acceptable in ethnic hymnody and what should be omitted.

5. Ultimately everything in every culture must be evaluated in light of biblical principles and the ethnotheology of the society.

In conclusion, this is an attempt to help people working in cross-cultural church settings to reflect on the process of music composing—most articles mentioned are available from the author. We hope the least that will happen as a result of this reflection is that no one will stand in the way of such a growth of Christian music. At best, missionaries will become catalysts in the development of beautiful, meaningful, and valuable music in the Christian church around the world.

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# Evolving African Hymnody

MARY K. OYER

The hymnody of a people reflects that group's mode of perceiving and responding to God's person and acts in history. Both the concepts of the text and the character of the music reveal the particular people's view of life—their experience of time and space, of cosmic order, and of relationships among human beings and the supernatural world.

Congregations seldom find a need to articulate the role of hymns in their worship. It is usually obvious. There is for individuals and for the group an inner recognition of the value of their tradition without rationalized explanations. When two diverse groups wish to meet, however, the traditions of worship of the one—in use of language and music—will not be immediately understandable to the other. In order to communicate, they will need to learn each other's language and find some way to grasp the other's musical idiom.

Unfortunately, when missionaries went to Africa almost two hundred years ago, they saw the need to study language, but they carried their own hymns and musical practices with them. They translated the texts into various vernaculars, even though the shape of the Western musical line violated the tone of the African language, and accents often fell on unaccented syllables of text.

We have the record, through oral transmission, of a remarkable exception to this general rule. Ntsikana, the first Xhosa Christian in South Africa, composed a hymn in his own idiom. The translation reads:

He is the Great God, Who is in heaven.  
Thou art Thou, true Shield.  
Thou art Thou, Stronghold of truth.  
Thou art Thou, Thicket of truth.  
Thou art Thou who dwellest in the highest.  
He who created life below, created life above.  
That Creator who created, created heaven.  
This Maker of the stars and the Pleiades.  
A star flashed forth, it was telling us.  
The Maker of the blind, does he not make them of a purpose?  
The trumpet sounded. It has called us.  
As for his chase, he hunts for souls.  
He, who reconciles flocks that fight with each other.  
He, the Leader, who has led us.  
He is the Great Blanket; we do put it on.  
Those hands of thine, they are wounded.  
Those feet of thine, they are wounded.  
Thy blood, why is it streaming?  
Thy blood, it was shed for us.  
This great price; are we worthy?  
This home of thine; are we worthy?  
(Lumko Song Book 1984, No.7)

The music consisted of one phrase, falling from its highest note to its lowest at the end of the phrase (Ex. 1):  
Example 1



Mary Oyer was a member of the Goshen College faculty from 1945-87. She first visited East Africa in 1969 and taught at Kenyatta University 1980-81 and 1985-86. Mary served as executive secretary of the *Mennonite Hymnal* project 1962-69, as secretary of the *Hymnal Project Committee* from 1982-89, and was editor of the *Hymnal Sampler* published in 1989.

Its shape is far more African than Western. European melodies tend toward an arch shape, with moderate rise and fall. The continuous repetition of that one musical phrase for the entire text was and still is an attractive form in traditional music, but it may have been one reason why Western missionaries neither understood nor valued the hymn. It is hard to imagine what might have happened to missions had Ntsikana's poetic and musical gifts been acknowledged and pursued, but Western hymns in translation prevailed in mission churches for nearly one hundred and fifty years after his Great Hymn.

Early in the twentieth century, indigenous groups began to break away from mission churches, often following the call of a prophetic leader. The Harrists in Ivory Coast, for example, the Kimbanguists of Zaire, and the Zionists in Southern Africa all emerged in early decades of this century. In Kenya, secessions of new groups began in 1914 and by 1972 over 150 distinct groups were reported in the *Kenya Churches Handbook* (Kealy 1972:67). Many had thousands of followers. These independent or indigenous churches usually rejected the policies of the mission churches as well as their westernized modes of worship. They encouraged the use of traditional instruments, though they tended to make drums of their own design, size, and shape in order to distinguish their use in Christian worship from specific roles in traditional society, for which specific drums functioned.

Mission churches throughout the continent had good opportunities to hear indigenous church singing. A number of congregations, such as the Africa Israel Ninevah Church of Kenya, often worshiped out of doors; services began and ended with processions to a drum beat through the village or town. Each denomination, however, seemed to retain its own distinctive musical style, perhaps a bit like North American denominations and even congregations, which can be recognized by the type of hymns they sing—perhaps German chorales, gospel songs, or prayer and praise types.

A significant breakthrough came with the Second Vatican Council, 1963-65. African Catholics were mandated to Africanize:

In certain parts of the world, especially in mission lands, there are peoples who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music and a suitable place is to be given to it . . . adapting worship to their genius (Mbiti 1972:xviii).

The impact on the musical style of East African Catholics could not be instantaneous, but within a decade Masses and hymns in the Kiswahili language and in African musical styles were spreading rapidly. At the same time, the Lutherans and Anglicans in Tanzania were experimenting with singing Christian texts to traditional melodies.

It may be valuable to try to identify the elements of an indigenous "African" style of music. Although each vernacular carries with it a unique music, certain distinguishing generalizations are possible.

1. Rhythm is basic to the musical texture. For some groups, the drum is essential to an African sound. Father

Stefan Mbunga of Tanzania in a 1967 workshop presented a paper on "The Right Appreciation of Tanzanian Indigenous Music," urging the use of drums:

... you cannot prohibit African instrumental music or dancing without disturbing the soul's life. But you can give a new outlook and content to drumming and dancing through religious ideas and influences. *The drum* is not in itself a "heathen" instrument, but because it is used in many pagan contexts it had been regarded with suspicion ... In fact, it is the rhythm of the drums which "crosses" the rhythm of the song, and helps to create the interplay of rhythms which is the foremost distinguishing mark of African music (Mbunga 1967:6).

For other people, a shaker or hand claps may have the highest priority. In any case, the texture will be dense—full of beats. There will be cross rhythms: two beats against three occur frequently. For example, Jean Kidula recorded the singing of SOLID ROCK (Example 2) among Pentecostals and Quakers of Western Kenya. They altered the rhythm to accommodate a faster tempo, then added two claps to each triple grouping (Kidula 1986:117).

2. The emphasis on rhythm draws out the dance. North Americans can sit very still while singing, using only the head. An African would involve the whole person, often allowing different parts of the body to pick up the varied lines of rhythm. The whole body is involved in praise when Africans use their own idioms. Languages reveal that dance is inseparable from music. English has two words, *music* and *dance*. *Ngoma* in Kiswahili could mean drum or dance or the entire musical event. That language would talk of music in isolation with a Western-derived word, *musiki*.

3. The predominance of rhythm minimizes melody and harmony. Western music emphasizes precision of pitch in order to be able to combine notes in harmony. The percussive sounds of rattles and shakers, which are always present in African style, diffuse the sound and reduce clarity of pitch. It may be more important for a melody to follow the tone of the vernacular language than to settle on pitches which can be identified by lines and spaces of Western notation. Melodies often start high and fall gradually, as in Ntsikana's Great Hymn. They may cascade downward slowly in a shape which Curt Sachs, one of the earliest ethnomusicologists, claimed to be a common gesture in ancient melodies around the world.

Harmonies, which function to create tension and resolution in Western hymns, usually have a different role in African music, if they appear at all. A second voice may be added to a Western hymn—even third and fourth voices—but the harmonies will probably be altered to adjust to African tastes. Opposite motion of parts, which Westerners value, may turn into parallel gliding lines which decorate a melody rather than providing clash and tension. Here is a phrase of parallel lines in "My Jesus, I Love Thee," which I heard Brethren in Christ Zambians sing in 1987 (Example 3):

Example 2

The image shows musical notation for a hymn. The top line is a melody in G major with a treble clef, consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom line shows a clapping pattern with 'X' marks. The text 'My hope is built on nothing less' is written below the melody line. Above the melody line, the text 'BECOMES!' is written. Below the clapping line, the text 'CLAPS: X X X X X X X X X X X X' is written.

Example 3

The image shows musical notation for a hymn. The top line is a melody in G major with a treble clef, consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom line shows a clapping pattern with 'X' marks. The text 'My gracious Redeemer, my Savior' is written below the melody line. The word 'ETC.' is written at the end of the melody line.

Choirs learn their parts in lines, one at a time, rather than by chords. The resulting sound is more linear than vertical and harmonic. Key changes may be avoided by eliminating accidentals.

4. The strophic form (the same music used for each stanza) of a Western hymn is not a lively African form. Much more common is a solo-response structure in rather rapid interchange. The response is frequently repetitious so that the group can learn it on one hearing and will have no trouble responding as needed. The length of the interchange is not programmed in advance. A given hymn may be brief one day and considerably longer on the next, depending on the leader's imagination and the energy with which the group responds. The solo-response form signifies an important relationship. Nathan Corbitt discovered in his work with coastal Kenyans that "without a leader, the song does not sing well." The leader must be able to "light the fire," to "fill the heart" for the singers (Corbitt 1985:156). Solo and response make an inseparable pair, creating the complete expression.

An equally important structural characteristic is the cyclical repetition of a brief phrase (as in Ntsikana's Great Hymn). For my ears, there seems to be no strong forward thrust or sense of growth leading to a climax in much traditional music. Perhaps work songs influence this form. A work song regulates the speed of activity, keeping it uniform—neither too fast nor too slow. This evenness of flow in time strikes the Westerner as a unique African contribution to world music. It may symbolize an attitude toward time which accepts, rather than attempts to overcome, the natural regularities: day and night, the changing seasons, for example. Marwa Kisare, Mennonite Bishop in western Tanzania, commented in his autobiography on the cyclical effect of the music of the Luo drums played at his father's burial:

As Father's body was lowered into the grave, the drums began their rolling dirge—rising and falling like the ceaseless rolling of waves onto the lakeshore, sighing and moaning, representative of the ceaseless circle of life, birth, bloom, infinity, death, round and round, a dirge articulating the sorrow and despair deep in the souls of scores of people cut adrift by Father's passing (Kisare 1984:34).

5. What makes a "beautiful" sound is determined by the ideals of a particular culture. The West over the centuries has cut out the buzzing sounds which are vital to traditional African music. An African university student told me that there is no emotion without a buzz. The sound of most instruments dies away rapidly. The sustained character of the imported organs must have shocked and

baffled early African Christians, who were accustomed instead to fast reiterated sounds. In addition, much music-making takes place out-of-doors. An enclosed space, so valued by Westerners since the first opera house in 1637, creates very different acoustical effects. Some Africans have learned to like it, but for many of them it is an acquired taste.

Within the past three decades the movement toward these indigenous African values has increased. I suggest four stages in that change of direction and will illustrate each with an example from the Mennonite Church in Eastern Africa.

1. The continued use of Western hymns in translation, though altered to fit local tastes.

2. Exploring the use in hymns of the innovations introduced by choirs.

3. Writing Christian texts for traditional tunes.

4. Composing new works in African styles.

The Mennonite Church in East Africa, like other mission churches, has been enlarging its vision of a hymnody in African style.

1. Western hymns in translation, especially in Kiswahili, are valued. A hymnbook, *Tenzi za Rohoni* (*Songs of the Spirit*) was published in 1968. The editors recommended the use of the tunes in the books they had used for the compilation: *Church and Sunday School Hymnal*, 1902; *Church Hymnal*, 1927; *Life Songs 1*, 1916; *Life Songs 2*, 1938, and some British favorites, especially Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*. The translators often encountered accent problems. For example, "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds" is in iambic rhythm (alternating light, heavy). In translation it became trochaic (alternating heavy, light), which would suggest that the tune ORTONVILLE would not be suitable (Example 4).

Example 4

But congregations seem to be able to cope with what seems awkward to me. Perhaps traditional music of some ethnic groups has more rhythmic flexibility than is present in ORTONVILLE; accents may not be placed as strictly at beginnings of measures. In any case, Mennonite churches continue to use these translations. Congregations do alter some musical details of their favorite hymns, adapting the music to their own hearing and values. Half steps and leading tones are not a part of the musical vocabulary of some groups, so congregations will remove them, substituting other notes, as in "Rock of Ages" at \* (Example 5).

Example 5

Example 6

Key changes may not appeal to them. The Nairobi Mennonite Church adds a second line to NICAEA, leaving out the accidental which pulls to a new key in the second phrase (Example 6).

2. Innovations in hymnody have often come through the choirs. Bishop Kisare was supportive of choirs at a time when choirs were not permitted in worship in the missionaries' home congregations. He wrote in his autobiography:

I love music. Choirs are my delight. I try always to promote choirs. In our spiritual life conferences I give the young people a large part of the program for their choirs. Sunday morning worship is too dull if there is no choir to brighten the service. We all need each other in the church, each contributing his or her part according to the gifts and station which each has (Kisare 1984:99).

I attended such a spiritual life conference at Shirati in 1972. At each of the sessions, all eighteen choirs who came sang several numbers. Two choirs stand out especially in my memory. The first was a group of mature Luo women who sang in their vernacular rather than in Kiswahili. The resulting music could not follow Western rhythms or scales. The other choir of younger singers had the courage to add percussion: a metal ring struck by metal and a nail rubbed across the rings of a glass Fanta bottle. In both cases, the spontaneous response of the congregation was overwhelming, and high-pitched ululations broke out among the women in appreciation and approval. At my next visit to Tanzanian Mennonite churches in 1980, choirs were using drums and shakers as a matter of course.

That gathering of choirs in 1972 was characterized further by suggestions of dance. A number of them entered down the aisle to the platform with a rhythmic processional until one of the worship leaders requested that they get to their special numbers with less expenditure of time. And the directors, with ornate batons, seemed to be dancing in front of their choirs; the usual Western role of keeping the group together was not needed because the singers listened to each other intently and stood close enough to their neighbors to feel their breathing.

3. Last August I visited a Maasai Mennonite congregation which met under a large fig tree near Ongwedhi, Kenya. They sang from a book of texts published by the Christian Missionary Fellowship, a group which values and respects the culture of the people with whom they work. Many of the songs in this hymnal, *Maisisa Enkai*, they recorded on tape and made available to Maasai. The Mennonites sang one in solo-response style, with this refrain (Example 7).

One of the members, Joseph Sangale, told me that the melody is an old Maasai song for the worship of special,

Example 7

E-hoo loo-mon ho-la-le-yio A-she na-leng En-kai ai par-mu-ain  
 To la-sar lo lki-kau li-no Ye-su Ol-no-ti le Nkai ai ki-mug'iet Iyie in-ta-ras.

(Translation: Thanks be to God, who gave us Jesus, the first-born, as a sacrifice, by his mercy.)

sacred trees or for unusually important people, such as the healer. The word *ho-la-le-yio*, he said, could not be translated; it is there like a “helping verb, to make the song sit.”

The tune has characteristics similar to those of Maasai cattle songs; quick upward leaps at beginnings of phrases and a slower descent downward to a magnet-like lowest note. The fall of a fourth (as from *doh* to *sol*) is a typical Maasai cadence. In fact, it is quite characteristic of cattle songs I have heard from other Kenyan groups.

The text fits Maasai experience, with its motif of sacrifice and mention of sacred trees and the fly whisk (“holy tail”), symbol of authority:

**REFRAIN:** Eooo loomon holaleyio  
 Ashe na leng Enkai ai parmuain  
 To lasar lo lkiakau lino Yesu  
 Oinoti le Nkai ai kimug'iet Iyie intaras.  
 1. Ayooki endaruna sirua pasae iruko enajo.  
 I go in early morning. God hears me.  
 2. Intaiki ntomonok o ilewa olasas lo lkiakau Yesu.  
 You give women and me a sacrifice of first-born: Jesus  
 3. Inchoo enasho o emukate meyakl empuan'lelo.  
 Those who give bread, I will give life.  
 4. Oong'amu to ling'ur le Yesu intaiki enashe Enkai.  
 I receive the mercy of Jesus and give God thanks.  
 5. Enkai nasai atasaiyia tokordu maa kisai.  
 God (to be worshipped) help those who pray to you.  
 6. Tokordu oliruko oleitu eiruk meibung'a osotua ng'ejuk.  
 Help those with faith and without - so hold the good news.  
 7. Osotua lo inoti Yesu eitukurieki ilasari.  
 The peace of Jesus Christ is the one that washed away all other sacrifices  
 8. Neari te msalaba neitajeu pookin osuji.  
 He was killed on the cross and saves whoever follows.  
 9. Inyo tudumu inkonyek mirura olalashe ogol ong'u ening.  
 Stand up, open your eyes, you hard-hearted brother.  
 10. Inyo isoma Ilhebrania oolimu ematua e tomon.  
 Stand, read Hebrews Chapter 12.  
 11. Ajo eiting'o ilasari le nkop liyieng'ie intare olmong.  
 All sacrifices have ended, where you offer sheep and cows.  
 12. Eiting'o entasim olchani orok meekure ekutu toki.  
 The idol of the tree doesn't value anything.  
 13. Osesen, osarage le Yesu, olasas lintaiki Enkai.  
 The body and blood of Jesus is the sacrifice you give to God.  
 14. Eitanapa Yesu ilenyena nemaiyian ile keper.  
 Jesus commanded his followers and blessed the heaven.  
 15. King'amunye olmumua sinyati olamal oiruko Enkai.  
 We receive with a holy tail the team who believe in God.

4. Occasionally an original work in an indigenous style emerges from Mennonites in eastern Africa. One which the 1978 *Mennonite World Conference Songbook* introduced to North Americans is *Haye aan ammanno* (*Klassen 1990:No.8*) (Example 8).

Example 8

▼●// Let us praise him! Praise him!//  
 God the great Creator!  
 Let us praise him! praise him!

▼●// Haye aan ammanno//  
 Ilahi na uuntay  
 Haye aan ammanno.

○ God Creator made us all.  
 Ears and eyes and all four limbs.  
 Over us he watches.  
 Let us praise him! Praise him!

○ Wu na eegayayo  
 na ihaaliyay e.  
 Ilahi na uuntay  
 Haye aan ammanno.

Example 8 continued

2 ○ God Creator gave his word.  
 Called us to obey him too.  
 He will then reward us.  
 Let us praise him! Praise him!  
 3 ○ Those who on the Lord believe;  
 He has made us each his child.  
 God the Father loves us.  
 Let us praise him! Praise him!

2 ○ Indhihiyo dhegaha  
 iyo afarta adin  
 Asaga na siye,  
 Haye aan ammanno.  
 3 ○ Intii eraygiisa  
 addeedoo rumaysa  
 Wu u abaalgudaye,  
 Haye aan ammanno.  
 4 ○ Tr. from Somali by Bertha Beachy  
 Adapt. by the editors, 1978.

○ Intii aamintoo dhan  
 inamu ka yeel e,  
 Haye aan ammanno.

Somali text by Adam J. Farah

Let us praise him! Praise him!  
 God the great Creator!  
 Let us praise him! praise him!

Haye aan ammanno.  
 Ilahi na uuntay  
 Haye aan ammanno.

It was composed by Adam J. Farah, whose early years were spent as a camel herder. An oral work like this will have varying versions of pitch in notation. This version corresponds closely to the way he sang it at Wichita in 1978 and the way the believers in Mogadishu sang it in July 1986.

These four stages do not necessarily occur in chronological order from one to four; they may be simultaneous. The newer approaches are often additions to the continued use of Western hymns in translation, and they represent an enrichment of worship resources rather than a replacement of the earlier. However, the last two stages represent the more complete contextualization of musical style, and they offer enriching possibilities for the worldwide church.

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## William Wadé Harris (1860-1929): African Evangelist and "Ethnophymnologist"<sup>1</sup>

JAMES R. KRABILL

Most Western missionaries down through the years have believed that music was an important part of Christian worship and should as such play a central role in the life of the faith communities taking shape as a result of their efforts. Unfortunately, many missionaries have worked under the assumption that "heathen" people could produce only "heathen" music—which must be discarded—and that Western music being "Christian music" was the perfect replacement to fill the newly-created musical vacuum.

It was no doubt this belief which inspired Rev. W. R. Stevenson to write with a considerable sense of achievement already one century ago:

The fact is that the best hymns of Watts, Doddridge, Cowper, Newton, Wesley, Heber, Lyte, Keble, Bonar, Miss Steele, Miss Havergal and other English authors—the best German hymns—the best hymns of American composition—are now sung in China and South Africa, in Japan and Syria, among the peoples of India, and in the isles of the Pacific Ocean—indeed, in almost every place where Protestant missionaries have uplifted the Gospel banner and gathered Christian Churches (Stevenson 1892:759).

### Four stages in the development of Africa's hymn traditions

It is not surprising, given these views, that many of the hymn traditions utilized by churches in Africa and elsewhere around the world today have passed, or are currently passing, through a number of stages in their development:

#### STAGE 1: Importation (where hymn tunes and texts both originate with the missionary)

Here, "the best hymns of Watts, Doddridge, Wesley and others" are simply taken over from the West and reproduced as accurately as possible in African worship contexts. Hymns at this stage may—with the passage of time—be "Africanized," which for the tunes means introducing the use of drums, rattles and other locally-produced instruments, and for the

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texts, translating them from Western into locally-spoken languages. Even these translated hymns, however—though perhaps more fully understood than those remaining in a "foreign" language—are really little more than "short-cuts," "temporary stop-gaps" and in any case "from the point of view of their art, not the best" (Nketia 1962:119). For the problem with hymns (translated or non-translated) in Stage 1 is that they supplant the indigenous music system. And "music [being] a vital part of a people's identity... cannot be replaced without damage to the individual and to the society" (Chenoweth and Bee 1968:206).

#### STAGE 2: Adaptation (where some part of the missionary's hymn—tune or text—is replaced or otherwise significantly altered by an indigenous form)

What happens here is more than a simple "translation" of Western tunes (with rattles) or texts (with language) into an African idiom; it is rather a total substitution of some part of the Western hymn (tune or text) by a tune or text of indigenous composition. This "adaptation" can take place in two ways: 1) where Western tunes are retained, but new, locally-written texts replace the Western ones;<sup>2</sup> or 2) where Western texts are retained and put to new, locally-composed tunes.<sup>3</sup>

#### STAGE 3: Imitation (where both the texts and tunes are locally composed, but the tunes are an imitation of Western melodies)<sup>4</sup>

#### STAGE 4: Indigenous composition (where both tunes and texts are locally produced)

This stage should be, according to ethnophymnologists, "the goal" for churches in Africa for "when a people develops its own hymns with both vernacular words and music, it is good evidence that Christianity has truly taken root" (Chenoweth and Bee 1968:210).

The majority of Africa's churches, however, are still nowhere near having reached this point. In the spring of 1987, I was invited to attend a grandiose Sunday morning worship service bringing together over a thousand members of the Western District of Ivory Coast's Methodist Church. Six choirs and one brass band performed a total of 37 hymns throughout the course of the nearly three-hour celebration. And of those 37 hymns, no less than 35 were of the "imported" (Stage 1) variety—27 of these (including Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus") being further-

more reproduced in the French language, with the remaining eight (including “Joy to the World”) translated into local languages. There were no “adapted” hymns, so far as I could tell, and only two fit the category of “indigenous compositions.”

Africa’s independent churches have in many ways been the leaders in creating a modern African Christian hymnology, yet even here it is surprising how many of these movements have simply “taken over” with them the hymnbooks of the parent mission churches from which they departed.<sup>5</sup> Some independents have even dramatically increased over the years the number of Western hymns used in worship. The Church of the Lord (Aladura) is apparently such a case if one examines the historical development of the church’s hymnal: The 1932 edition contained a “Western hymn” to “original hymn” ratio of 0 to 207; in the 1940 edition we find a ratio of 52 to 166; and by the time the third edition appeared in 1958, the tables had turned and the ratio had become 211 to 97 (Turner 1967:296).

There is, however, in both independent and mission-founded churches a kind of musical revival taking place in many parts of Africa today. This revival is producing an enthusiastic wave of spontaneous creativity which Adrian Hastings considered already in the late 1970s to be perhaps “the single most encouraging thing that has happened in African Christianity in this decade.”<sup>6</sup> “The time has come,” said a Methodist pastor on Ivory Coast’s national radio (March 18, 1984), “to make of our church an African church, to lay aside the foreign system imposed upon us by the missionaries, and to begin composing our own African hymns accompanied by our own African instruments!”

While Western ethnomusicologists and African pastors and theologians are making urgent appeals for the creation of more indigenous forms of worship throughout the continent, there is at least one African Church who remains little interested—if not slightly amused—by the whole debate. This is the Harrist Church of southern Ivory Coast—a church composed of second- and third-generation descendants of the mass movement inspired by Liberian-born Prophet William Wadé Harris during the first decades of this century.

### **William Wadé Harris, the prophet-evangelist**

When late in 1913 Prophet William Wadé Harris left his native Liberia to begin his now well-known evangelistic campaign through southern Ivory Coast, he found himself confronted with a population having had little if any previous exposure to Christianity.<sup>7</sup> French Catholic missionaries had for almost twenty years been working tirelessly at establishing a credible and lasting presence in the area, but had met with limited success. And the only Protestant presence to speak of was to be found in small and scattered groups of African English-speaking clerks from Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Liberia, and Gambia, who had come to Ivory Coast, not as missionaries, but as agents of British trading companies doing business with the coastal peoples.

The Prophet’s preaching, “fetish”-burning, and baptizing ministry lasted a mere eighteen months until his expulsion from the colony in January 1915. The impact of that brief ministry, however, was most remarkable indeed, resulting in an estimated 100,000-200,000 persons turning from traditional religious beliefs and practices toward a new reality structured around certain rudimentary tenets

of the Christian faith as prescribed by the Prophet: worship of the “one, true God”; weekly gathering on the seventh day for preaching, prayer, and singing; initial exposure to God’s law in the Ten Commandments and to the Lord’s Prayer; and the choosing of new “religious specialists” (preachers and twelve apostles) responsible in each village for watching over the general well-being of the church.

### **Harris, the “ethnohymnologist”**

In general, the Prophet Harris was a “man on the move,” never lingering long in any one location. In some instances, villagers would travel long distances to see the Prophet, receive baptism from his hand, and then return home all in the same day.

One of the questions frequently asked of Harris by new converts during those brief encounters concerned the type of music which they were expected to sing once they arrived back home in their villages. “Teach us the songs of heaven,” they pleaded with the Prophet, “so that we can truly bring glory to God.”

Now it is important to understand something of Harris’ background in order to appreciate his response to the thousands of new believers who crowded around him, clinging almost desperately to every word of counsel he could give them. Born of a Methodist mother in 1860,<sup>8</sup> William Wadé Harris had spent over thirty-five years—nearly all of his pre-prophetic adult life (1873-1910)—attending and actively serving the “civilized” Methodist and Episcopal churches of eastern Liberia. Quite understandably, the Western hymn traditions which filled the liturgies of these churches had come to be the sacred music dearly loved and cherished by Harris as well. When asked in 1978 whether Harris had any favorite hymns, the Prophet’s grandchildren recalled without hesitation, “Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending” (his “favorite” hymn, which he sang repeatedly), “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah,” “Jesus, Lover of My Soul,” “How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord,” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (Shank 1980:597f, 1156f).

Yet faced with the crowd seeking his advice on this most important matter, the Prophet refused easy answers. “I have never been to heaven,” he wisely told them, “so I cannot tell you what kind of music is sung in God’s royal village. But know this,” he continued, “that God has no personal, favorite songs. He hears all that we say in whatever language. It is sufficient for us to compose hymns of praise to him with our own music and in our own language for him to understand.”

When asked further how exactly they were to proceed in composing these new “songs of God,” the Prophet told the people to begin by using the music and dance forms with which they were already acquainted. For the Dida people—one of the first and largest ethnic groups to feel the impact of the Prophet’s ministry—this represented a remarkable repertoire of at least thirty distinct classifications of traditional musical genres, ranging from love ballads and funeral dirges to songs composed for hunting, rice planting, and rendering homage to wealthy community leaders.

Not all musical genres, however, were suitable, according to the Prophet, for use in praising God. The following story from late 1913 describes how Harris helped the Dida people in the coastal village of Lauzoua to identify what kind of traditional music might best be used in hymn composition.

The Prophet requested a calabash (rhythmical instrument) from one of the women traveling with him and handed it to Dogbontcho, a well-known local female musician-composer. Dogbontcho in turn began singing for Harris a *zlanje* tune (a classification of traditional “love songs” among the Dida). When she had finished, Harris said, “That song does not honor God! Sing another kind!”

This time Dogbontcho chose a *dogblo* tune (traditional “praise songs” of political or religious patronage):

He who does not worship God will worship fetishes instead;  
But the day that God tells him:  
“Follow me and abandon your fetishes,”  
That day he will have to do what God commands him.

The entire population of Lauzoua soon broke out in song joining in behind their lead singer. The Prophet himself, carried away by the rhythm of the music, climbed out of his canoe and began dancing. And then a miracle happened, for the paralytic Dogbontcho herself abandoned her cane and began dancing with the Prophet, accompanied by the entire population of Lauzoua now overcome with joy.

Following this miracle, the Prophet counseled the people of Lauzoua to refrain henceforth from using their *dogblo* music for “profane” purposes, but to dedicate it instead to God, transforming it bit by bit and in such a way that it might bring glory to God. And this is how the traditional *dogblo* music of the Dida population of Lauzoua and Yocoboué became the sacred music of the church which took shape following the Prophet’s coming to these parts.<sup>10</sup>

### Setting the new faith to music

Encouraged by these words of counsel and armed with the confidence that they were themselves capable of producing music acceptable to God, Dida composers set to work, expressing with great enthusiasm their new-found faith (Hymn DE25):<sup>11</sup>

We too, we have at last found our Father.  
We did not know that we were going to find our Father.  
But we have found our Father;  
Our Father is the King of Glory.

One group of old men from the Dida village of Makey reported to me in 1984 that Harris, in his Lauzoua statement, had given two very specific guidelines for the composition of hymns: 1) that traditional “praise songs” (literally, songs which “hurl forth” or “shout out the name of someone”) should be employed in the creation of new songs, intended now to bring praise to God; and 2) that much use should be made of “forgiveness language”—language ordinarily employed by an individual who “wishes to reestablish with some other person a relationship which has been broken or in some significant way greatly marred.”<sup>12</sup> It is remarkable how many of the earliest Harrist hymns do in fact seem to express one or another aspect of these two themes of “praise” and “forgiveness.”

In the years which followed the Prophet’s swift passage through southern Ivory Coast, Dida Harrist composers found other themes and developed additional music styles as they learned to read the Scriptures and grew in Christian understanding. My work with Dida leadership in collecting and transcribing Harrist hymns brought to light over 500 hymn texts spanning the 75-year period from 1913 to 1988. Since my departure from Ivory Coast two years ago, at least thirty new compositions have been added to the list.

### A model for today

Studies in recent years made by missionary anthropologists and Christian ethnomusicologists have increasingly insisted upon the following affirmations:

- 1) That “although God exists totally outside of culture, while humans exist totally within culture, God chooses the cultural milieu in which humans are immersed as the arena for his interaction with people.”<sup>13</sup>
- 2) That Western culture with its particular musical traditions has been in the past and can be today “one such arena for God’s interaction with people.” Should, however, Western culture, Western languages, and Western music come to be perceived as the only or even preferred arena for God’s activity, then we are faced with a misconception which is “not only culturally stultifying but also theological heresy” (Friesen 1981:ii-iii).
- 3) That God can inspire and speak through every culture, every language and every music system (regardless of whether persons outside of that culture have an aesthetic response to it). To deny this is to deny the universality of God.<sup>14</sup>

The Prophet Harris never claimed to be a theologian, much less an ethnomusicologist or a cultural anthropologist. But today’s ethnohymnologists, trained in these disciplines, could do worse if ever they were to choose him as their “patron saint.” “God has no personal, favorite songs,” he had told the Dida people at Lauzoua. “He hears all that we say in whatever language; it is sufficient for us to praise him in our own language for him to understand.”

### Notes

1. This article is based upon several sections from my dissertation, *The Hymnody of the Harrist Church Among the Dida of South-central Ivory Coast (1913-1949): An Historico-Religious Study*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (England), 2 vols., 1989, 779 pp.

2. For examples here, see W. J. Wallace, “Hymns in Ethiopia,” *Practical Anthropology*, 9 (November/December 1962), p. 271; and Mary Key, “Hymn Writing with Indigenous Tunes,” *Practical Anthropology*, 9 (November/December 1962), pp. 258-259.

3. Cf. Louis L. King, “Indigenous Hymnody in the Ivory Coast,” *Practical Anthropology*, 9 (November/December 1962), p. 269; James M. Riccitelli, “Developing Non-Western Hymnody,” *Practical Anthropology*, 9 (November/December 1962), pp. 251-254; John F. Carrington, “African Music in Christian Worship,” *International Review of Mission*, 37 (1948), p. 201.

4. This stage is suggested by Rev. Richard Rakotondraibe in Donald Bobb’s “African Church Music” in *Journey of Struggle, Journey of Hope*, ed. by Jane Heaton, New York: Friendship Press, 1983, p. 24.

5. See B. G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1961 (1948, 1st ed.), p. 193, for the Zulu Zionists; J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of the African Independent Church*, New York: NOK Publishers International, Ltd., 1982, p. 159, for the Cherubim and Seraphim; and Harold W. Turner, *African Independent Church*, Vol. II, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 296, for the Church of the Lord (Aladura).

6. Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity*, New York: Seabury Press, 1976, p. 52; also, by the same author, *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (African Studies Series, 26), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 235.

7. The richest resource for bibliographical materials on the Prophet’s Ivory Coast ministry is David A. Shank, *A Prophet of Modern Times: The Thought of William Wadé Harris, West African Precursor of the Reign of Christ*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen (Scotland), 3 vols., 1980, 1180 pp. Cf. in particular Shank’s second chapter, more recently published as a separate

article in the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XIV, 2 (1983), pp. 130-160, which provides an historiographical survey of some 180 items written on the subject over a sixty-five year period (1914-1980s).

8. Harris' date of birth has not been definitively established though Shank's proposal of 1860, accepted here, seems most convincing.

9. For a complete listing here, cf. Krabill, *The Hymnody*, p. 176.

10. For a fuller account of Harris' advice to the Dida people of Lauzoua, see my article, "Dida Harrist Hymnody (1913-1990)" in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XX, 2 (June 1990), pp. 119-120.

11. The code system used in collecting and classifying Dida Harrist hymns is described in my paper, "Collecting and Preserving Hymns: An Aspect of Ministry with AICs," presented at the Kinshasa Pan-African Conference of Interdenominational Mission Agencies Relating to African Independent Churches, July 1-6, 1989. Conference papers are scheduled for publication early next year by Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana.

12. Interview with old men in the Dida village of Makey (April 21, 1984).

13. A quote from Charles Kraft in Martin Wroe, "Ancient and Modern: Church Music and the Culture Gap," *The Third Way* (August 1985), p. 22.

14. Cf. Vida Chenoweth, "Spare Them Western Music?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 20, 1 (January 1984), p. 30.

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## Sing to the Lord a New Song

MALCOLM WENGER

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things;  
his right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him.

The Lord has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness  
to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth  
have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3)

The Hebrew singer had gained a new understanding of God. A new song welled up from an overflowing heart. We may know almost nothing about the melodies, the rhythms, the intervals, or the musical structure of the song. But we can be sure that the forms used were not unfamiliar to those who heard the song. The singer may have combined those musical elements in a new way, but what was most important was a fresh realization of who God was and his purposes and actions in the world and among his people.

Something similar has taken place as the Christian gospel has become known to Native American peoples such as the Comanche, Kiowa, Arapaho, Crow, and Cheyenne. New thoughts about God and his ways have resulted in new songs using traditional musical forms and the language of the people. Intertribal "camp meetings" in Oklahoma became the setting where such indigenous hymnody was shared with Christians from neighboring tribes and often translated or the basic idea reworded in the new language.

Malcolm Wenger lived among the Northern Cheyenne Indians in Montana from 1944-66 and was a pioneer in recording Native American hymns. As chair of Indian Ministries for General Conference Mennonite Church, he helped to set up the Mennonite Indian Leaders Council. Malcolm and his wife, Esther, have also served as interim pastors in cross-cultural settings.

In many tribes the use of native musical forms was either discouraged or Christians themselves decided not to use their own forms. Hopi Christians expressed concern for the Cheyenne usage of their native music in Christian worship. Translations of Anglican and United Church hymnals into Indian languages seem to dominate Christian music in many native churches in Canada.

The Baptist missionaries who first came among the Kiowa of Oklahoma encouraged new Christians to develop their own music, and as a result a rich tradition of several hundred "church songs" developed. Mennonite missionaries have been more ambiguous. Rodolphe Petter, in spite of his unshakable conviction that the Word of God must be communicated in the Cheyenne language, saw red flags signaling syncretism when the same gospel was expressed in indigenous musical forms. Lois Barrett quotes from a letter Petter wrote to his wife after Harvey Whiteshield from Oklahoma, his initial helper in language work, visited the Montana Cheyenne churches in 1942 and introduced Christian songs to Cheyenne tunes rather than the German and English tunes which Petter used and loved.

Our Cheyenne songs, he [Whiteshield] simply discarded and tried . . . to introduce only his pet new Cheyenne songs, which are not the spiritual food or expression which growing Christians should have. They catch the Indians simply because their tune is like that of the heathen and peyote people. Tell our Cheyenne that the Sundance is a kind of spiritual, sacrificial replica of Christ's Passion, tell them that the Whites killed Jesus, tell them all the Scripture passages which are a pillow for them; sing their tunes etc., etc., do never mention things that *hurt* them, then, of course they will like it. Is that Christ's Gospel? Has such a message made the Oklahoma Indians morally better (1983:31)?

In spite of Petter's opposition, these indigenous songs were sung at family gatherings, home prayer meetings, wakes, funerals, and camp meetings. The hymns translated

by Petter from German and English were usually used in church services. However, missionary J. B. Ediger—who served at Clinton and Hammon, Oklahoma—developed a deep appreciation for indigenous songs and about 1930 began to encourage their use in services.

Use and development of indigenous Christian songs was slow in Montana. During my years of living with the Northern Cheyenne, from 1944 to 1966, I was at first unaware of such music. It was James and Julia Shoulderblade who introduced me to songs that they learned from Oklahoma Christians. Not knowing of previous opposition, I was excited to discover this indigenous hymnody and began to record some of the songs on tape and try to learn them.

It seemed to me that if the Christian faith were sung in native forms it could be much more readily received and understood. The Holy Spirit which God had promised to his children would surely guide the Cheyenne Christians in their choices of how to present the faith in song. Later visits to Montana by John Heap of Birds and Homer Hart enabled us to record additional songs. As I began to understand the texts of the songs, they seemed to me worthy of widespread use, and I began to think of making taped copies available with the possible publication of a new hymnbook that would include them.

In 1964, James Bixel, professor of music at Bluffton College, took a summer leave of absence to study Christian hymnody among the Cheyenne and the Hopi, with the thought of encouraging the expression of Christian faith in native forms of music and art. He recorded Southern Cheyenne indigenous Christian songs, and encouraged Hopi Christians to develop their own hymnody. He later made his recordings available for a Cheyenne hymnbook project.

In 1974, trained musician David Gruber and his wife, Bonnie, arrived in Busby, Montana. David became interested in Cheyenne music. That fall he went to Oklahoma to record more indigenous hymns available there. Through David's work and with assistance on texts provided by Wayne and Elena Leman, Wycliffe Bible Translators assigned to the Northern Cheyenne in 1975, a hymnbook of indigenous songs began to take shape. It was published in 1982 as *Tsese-Ma'heone-Nemeototse, Cheyenne Spiritual Songs* by Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kansas.

This hymnbook reflects the response of Indian people to the story of the gospel as they heard it. The fact that these songs were opposed by missionaries or not included in the "official" songbook used in worship adds credibility to the message they contain as a window on the past. Of the 161 songs in the book, 90 of them have texts written by Cheyenne people. A few are translations of songs from other tribal languages or from English. These songs have been kept alive in the hearts and minds of people, some for perhaps as long as 80 years.

Of these 90 songs written by Cheyenne people, what did Cheyenne Christians choose to sing about? How did they describe the Christian gospel and changes it brings about? What important Christian teachings did they include or omit? Following are illustrations from the literal English translations included in *Cheyenne Spiritual Songs* (CSS) although in a few instances the word order is slightly changed to be less awkward in English.

Some of these songs are quite old. One of them is attributed to a man who died approximately the year that I was born and is sung to an Arapaho melody:

Great Chief Jesus, Great Chief Jesus  
I was happy when to your way I came.  
Jesus with your mercy clothe me!  
(Two Crows, CSS 24)

Songs were usually short but were repeated several times. A leader would start a song without announcing it and the groups would join in. Some of the very short ones still carry much meaning:

A Christian says, "My Father loves me."  
He is right.  
(Traditional Cheyenne giveaway song, CSS 84)

My heavenly Father, I love you.  
I love you very much.  
I love you.  
(Maude Fightingbear, CSS 81)

One of the themes that runs through many of the songs is joy, praise, and thanksgiving to God:

Let's praise God that with his great power  
He leads us daily! "Thank you," we say to God.  
When I was lost here on earth,  
God was merciful to me too.  
To God I prayed, he helped me, he saved me.  
(Belle Wilson Rouse, CSS 9)

Thank you Jesus for leading us.  
Your Godliness makes us rejoice every day.  
Thank you, Jesus, for being merciful to us.  
(Frances Goose, CSS 131)

Who is the God to whom the Cheyenne Christians sing?  
When we share the gospel in a new culture, there is sometimes anxiety to know what name to use for "God." The Hopi know of several divine beings, none which seem appropriate to use as the name for the God revealed in Jesus. Finally the English word "God" was borrowed.

The Cheyenne used the name *Ma'heo'o*, or in the plural *Ma'heono*, for the supernatural beings or forces or mysteries to whom they prayed. Cheyenne Christians did not hesitate to use *Ma'heo'o* for "God." But note how carefully they defined who he is:

My God is the Most High.  
He is the Truth and the Light.  
He sits as chief in the highest heaven.  
He has power and glory.

My God is truly the one to be thanked  
Because he is merciful and lovingly kind.  
My God is truly alive,  
He is the one who gave us eternal life.  
(Maude Fightingbear, CSS 8)

Other songs say that *Ma'heo'o* is the true God (CSS 12), the one who made heaven and earth (CSS 11), the one who sent his Son to save us (CSS 26), and our Father above, the First One (CSS 95).

Who then is Jesus?

Jesus is God.  
On earth His way is the only good way.  
Follow it!  
He will take you through where it is difficult.  
He will have mercy on you.  
(Cheyenne hymn, CSS 49)

Jesus is the one who calls us.  
Come! Walk the way that he does!  
It is the only true way.  
(Old Colony camp meetings, CSS 50)

Jesus is the source of salvation (CSS 26), of cleansing (CSS 38), of help (CSS 2), of guidance and daily care (CSS 24), of refuge (CSS 114), of a good life on earth (CSS 46), and of a heavenly home (CSS 57). He is worthy of prayer (CSS 19), praise (CSS 18), honor (CSS 16), and thanksgiving (CSS 109). The names “Jesus” and “God” are used interchangeably in some songs (cf. CSS 122).

Salvation is described as deliverance from sin and being made into a new person (CSS 74), being chosen (CSS 96), being lost and then led (rather than found) (CSS 98), being clothed with the Holy Spirit (CSS 76), or with Jesus the Victor:

The Lord gave me His Son.  
He clothed me with the Victor.  
That's why I am happy.  
(Maude Fightingbear, CSS 30)

But by far the most frequent picture of the Christian life is that of the journey, of walking on Jesus' way. At least 21 songs include this imagery:

Jesus' way alone is good.  
It alone is true. Accept it!  
Rejoice because of it every day!  
The Holy Spirit will lead you.  
(Cheyenne Hymn CSS 79)

God, I too have taken your way.  
Be merciful to me!  
Whenever I sin, renew my mind!  
Stand with me!  
(Cheyenne Hymn CSS 68)

A popular song by John Heap of Birds has become known as the “Baptismal Song” from its frequent use in that setting:

Jesus, I have come to your way. Welcome me!  
I am walking, I am ready.  
Thank you, I tell you, that you will save me.  
(CSS 62)

The one becoming a Christian is expected to be actively walking with Jesus. The Christian life is faith in action. The word “church” does not occur in these songs. Yet it is clear that the Christian life involved the coming together of a people in response to an invitation from Jesus. As they approach God together, they rejoice and praise him.

Jesus, we rejoice to gather together with you.  
You have called us. “I am the way,” you say to us.  
Lead us well in your way!  
(John Heap of Birds, CSS 1)

Let us approach God! Let us approach God!  
He is the one who is the true God.  
Let us rejoice! Let us praise God's name!  
(Bell Wilson Rouse, CSS 5)

Our friend Jesus, our friend Jesus,  
He invites us, he invites us.  
Come together! Come together!  
Jesus calls us, come!  
(Attr. to Mrs. Bear Bow, CSS 3)

Some thirty songs offer guidance and resources for living the Christian life.

Discipleship is encouraged:

Jesus is the one who calls us.  
Come! Walk the way he does!  
It is the only true way.  
(Old Colony Camp meetings, CSS 50)

In hardship, we ask God not to be exempted, but to go with us:

God, look upon us! Be merciful to us!  
We carry your name.  
Bring us through, even though it is difficult!  
By your divine power we are victors.  
Be merciful to us!  
(Frances Goose, CSS 124)

We ask for help in temptation and sin:

Lord have mercy on me! Help me!  
I'm walking in dangerous places.  
(Maude Fightingbear, CSS 130)

Jesus, we go to you for refuge  
We are asking you with joyfulness  
Give us clear thinking in our lives.  
(John Heap of Birds, CSS 114)

Jesus, I am depending on you.  
I'm slow at learning your way,  
The good way which you gave us.  
Yet, I ask, be merciful to me.  
I just wait for you, Jesus.  
(John Heap of Birds, CSS 136)

A song of prayer says:

I thought about him in the morning,  
Since today, Jesus' day, the good day, has come.  
I prayed to him this morning.  
It made me happy to think about Jesus.  
(Harry Starr, CSS 19)

I found no songs about service to others, about offering a cup of cold water in Jesus' name. One possible reference to prophetic justice is found in CSS 54 attributed to Belle Rouse, “The high place will be put down.”

There are many songs in which the evangelistic invitation is extended to ask others to consider the Jesus road. For example:

Take the Savior as your friend!  
His way is the only good way.  
His story is the only true way.  
All over the world it has spread.  
(Newakis Lamebull, CSS 55)

Newakis worked as an informant at sessions of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Her students scattered all over the world and many wrote to tell her of their work of Bible translation. From her I first heard the Cheyenne language.

Singing was a culturally appropriate way among the Cheyenne to honor someone. The announcer called for a song in recognition of someone. The honored one danced in formal procession around the circle. In about 1910, Watan, a Cheyenne-speaking Arapaho, adapted this traditional honor song for use in honoring Jesus.

Sing an honor song to Jesus!  
Sing an honor song to Jesus!  
Now take his word!  
Now follow his way!  
Praise Jesus' name!  
Praise Jesus' name!  
(Old Colony, CSS 16)

Sometimes the Cheyenne appointed children to honorary positions of responsibility in the community. Someone else did the work but the child might be honored as the holder of the position by the giving of a valuable gift to a

stranger or visitor. In this song, God honors Jesus by seeking a stranger to whom God can give eternal life. To the traditional giveaway song (verse 1), Josephine Glenmore has added two verses using this custom to explain the Christian gospel. "Stranger," literally "traveler," by spiritual application can mean anyone not yet on God's road and part of God's family. The handshake acknowledges the gift.

A stranger, I'm looking for one.  
For the sake of my child I'm looking for one.

A stranger, I am looking for one.  
I am going to give away to him eternal life.

Stranger, I am looking for you.  
I am going to give away to you, come shake my hand.  
(CSS 58)

And finally a few songs about heaven and the second coming of Jesus.

Perhaps the time is near  
When the Lord Jesus will come back again.  
Get ready! Watch, and pray all the time!  
(Maude Fightingbear, CSS 42)

David Gruber explains in a note to the following song that Stacy Wolfchief, also known as Afraid of Beavers, was a Cheyenne who married into the Kiowa tribe and learned the Kiowa language. He originally made this as a Kiowa hymn, and Frances Goose, his niece, translated it into Cheyenne. It has often brought comfort and hope in time of grief.

Jesus, open the door for us  
When we also come to the kingdom, the beautiful land!  
Jesus, welcome us! We will arrive rejoicing  
At the eternal kingdom, at the eternal kingdom.  
(CSS 148)

Perhaps the best known of the songs about heaven is called "Howling Water's Song." Others think it was Alfrich

Heap of Birds who—died in 1922—who first sang it. These songs are looked upon not as personal creations but as gifts from God.

It is the most beautiful place above  
Where Jesus has gone to prepare for us.  
Let's praise him every day  
Because he prepared it well for us.  
(CSS 145)

Finally a song that leaves us with a searching question is based on 1 Peter 3:1-18:

Someday all heaven and earth will be destroyed.  
And when Jesus comes, we will all see him.  
And how shall we answer him?  
(Soar Woman, CSS 39)

How shall we answer him?

With the exception of songs about service and justice these indigenous Cheyenne spiritual songs give a broad coverage of Christian teaching. The omissions may have been on the part of their teachers.

Earlier this year when the Cheyenne church at Seiling, Oklahoma, and the Arapaho church at Canton, Oklahoma, ordained Newton and Amelia Old Crow, Christians wearing traditional dress sang praise to God using traditional musical forms in the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, and Kiowa languages. Perhaps the "musical barrier," as well as the language barrier, is not as high as it once was (Chenoweth 1968).

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## Experiencing Native American Music: Living with Cheyenne and Crow Indians

DAVID GRABER

### Experiences

In August 1973, I received a call from Ted Risingsun, a school board member at Busby School, to interview for a music teaching job on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. In less than two weeks, I moved with my family to Busby, Montana. We arrived in time for the Busby powwow. The community gathered for a "family reunion" with singing and dancing every night. My children and I heard and felt the drum beat from our home a half mile away. As a musician, I was compelled to get closer. I took a tape recorder and recorded comments: "The songs all sound alike.... They sing out of tune.... The meter of the song is out of sync with the beat of the drum.... There must be lots of improvisation or carelessness in singing."

David Gruber teaches music at the high school in Lodge Grass, Montana, where 90 percent of the students are Crow Indians. He and his family live in Hardin, Montana.

I tried to be respectful, but couldn't relate well to what I was hearing.

Months later an audio album arrived with Native American music arranged for classroom music teaching. I taught my students some Eskimo and Creek songs, and soon grandmothers were asking me, "Where did you get those Indian songs? Why don't you teach them our Cheyenne songs?" I began visiting elders who were glad to sing Cheyenne songs appropriate for children to learn in school. I started a small collection of recordings and began writing down some of the songs. I was invited to sing with a native drum group at powwows and, with some patient coaching, I began to unlearn tempered scale interval tuning, attachment of metric parameters like a "down beat" to the drum accompaniment. Basically what I thought was accident or improvisation was in reality essential to the songs—all this, of course, from musicians who had little or no formal training in European music.

Within the first months of our arrival, we attended a gathering of the Mennonite churches on the reservation, and I heard an elder gentleman sing a Christian song unlike any I had ever heard. James Shoulderblade, the singer, introduced me to the tradition of Cheyenne indigenous hymns; eventually James became an important contributor to the Cheyenne hymnbook.

The following year I learned to know Malcolm Wenger, one of the few missionaries to Native American people who valued and encouraged indigenous hymnody. He asked me to come to a conference of Mennonite Indian church leaders (MILC) in Oklahoma with a tape recorder. He and James Shoulderblade knew that the tradition of indigenous hymnody was being lost. He shared with me his dream of a hymnbook that would contain indigenous hymns alongside those translated by Rodolphe Petter, a Mennonite missionary who opposed indigenous hymnody among the Cheyenne. I went to Oklahoma, where the response to the project was generous. Elders encouraged the work and contributed songs.

In 1978, my family and I moved to Kansas. There work with Cheyenne in Oklahoma could proceed more easily. I made several trips to Oklahoma, meeting with people who contributed songs and historical information about the songs. Lawrence Hart, a Cheyenne Mennonite minister and traditional chief, and his wife, Betty, hosted my wife and me in Clinton. They also coordinated meetings to work on the hymns. Nine years later, in 1982, the Cheyenne hymnbook, *Tses-Ma-heone-Nemeotse*, was published, containing 160 hymns. At first it was going to be just a photocopied, loose-leaf notebook of songs. But with the urging of Ted Risingsun, the Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Leaders Council representative, and others, the committee decided to publish it with a hardback, so it would have the solid look and feel of most other hymnbooks.

Just this summer I completed the audio masters for a four-cassette album with recordings of all the hymns. Nearly all the indigenous hymns in the album are copies of the original recordings from which I wrote the indigenous hymns in the hymnbook. These are available from: The Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Churches, Box 72, Busby, MT 59016.

The hymnbook was well received in Montana, where Rodolphe Petter had so long opposed the indigenous hymns. The Cheyenne in Montana had learned and still love Petter's translated hymns, but these do not speak like the hymns that use music familiar to the Cheyenne and other Plains Indian people.

Writing down this oral tradition presented those of us involved in the project with complex issues, some of them hard to resolve. There was initially some opposition and even hostility from certain Native American traditionalists. In Oklahoma, the tradition remains oral, but there is growing interest in using the hymnbook. Lyle Redbird was commissioned by Mrs. Belle Wilson Rouse before she died nearly twenty years ago to continue the tradition of indigenous oral hymns she had so patiently taught along with her preaching and healing ministry. At first it appeared that Lyle's mission would be in conflict with the written hymns. Recently Lyle has been contributing to the hymnbook work and using the hymnbook in his own ministry.

In 1984, I was invited by some Crow Indian members of a Bible translation group to come back to Montana to work on developing the first Crow Indian hymnbook.

Although the Crow people have a long tradition of oral hymnody, they have not had a hymnbook in their own language. We moved to Hardin, Montana, where I am continuing to teach music in a local public high school on the Crow reservation.

My work with the Crow hymnbook project began with recording and archiving the recordings, and continues with writing the hymns for a hymnbook. A decision was made early this summer by the committee to separate the traditional hymns from the translated hymns, and to publish the first volume this summer or fall. As of October, the pages of the first volume of 48 hymns have been printed out with a laser printer, and when the cover and a historical narrative are completed, this will be published. I have also just completed audio masters for a cassette album of the songs in this hymnbook. The committee is looking for resources to produce this album so it is available along with the hymnbook.

### Observations

Most, if not all, American tribal groups that accepted Christianity initially responded with songs at home in their own culture. But the grammar of Native American music, with its glottals, pitch bends, and complex rhythmic structure and drum beat with no meter, was heard by Europeans to lack essential elements for hymn tunes. It was considered primitive, if not pagan.<sup>1</sup> Few missionaries gave their Native American converts consent to exercise creative musical traditions in a Christian way. Without those few there would be almost no authentic indigenous Native American hymnody. Apparently a few Baptist missionaries were the first to give free rein to Kiowa people of Oklahoma to sing and use their own music and texts for hymns. Jacob B. Ediger in Oklahoma and Malcolm Wenger in Montana were among those Mennonites who encouraged use of such songs among Cheyenne and Arapaho in worship services.

But it has taken a long time to give them the same status as European hymns. Except for a few indigenous hymns in South Dakota among the Oglala, I know of no other indigenous hymnody outside of those tribes exposed to the tradition in Oklahoma that arose with the consent of missionaries.

I think most tribal Christians, with a strong tradition of song-making, tried to make their own Christian songs modeled on the European pattern. They usually encountered a credibility problem. These songs were called "attempts to imitate" Christian hymns.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this, indigenous hymnody flourished in Oklahoma. Tent camp meetings were from early in this century an important setting for encouraging Christian evangelism as well as learning and sharing hymns. To this day, when camp meetings are held, representatives of different tribes are called on to share songs in their own tradition and language. These songs have been learned and translated for other tribes. Cheyenne and Crow singers often acknowledged to me that their hymn was originally a Kiowa hymn. There was also sharing of hymns among other tribes, especially the Comanche, Arapaho, and Sioux. To my knowledge, Native American indigenous hymnody was effectively throttled and disappeared—if it existed—among nearly all North American tribes except for these few Plains tribes.

Joe Medicine Crow, tribal historian and anthropologist who serves on the Crow Hymnbook Committee, estimates that there are over 200 indigenous Crow hymns. Many of

these are personal songs, and may be shared and sung by an individual in public testimony. Public singing may or may not lead to group singing of the song. Certainly, many Crow hymns remain a private expression of prayer and praise to God.

Since 1973, I have acquired respect and appreciation for the tradition of hymnody God has given Native American people. I am aware that what I have learned is a small part of what has been and what could still be, were there less cultural arrogance among those of the dominant European culture.

Music is only one of many cultural items still easily misunderstood and misused by persons of the dominant culture. In all these issues, careful listening and waiting for guidance to emerge from the people themselves is best. Native American Christians in this country have widely varying views regarding their own traditions and culture. Very few answers of what music, dance, or ceremonies are appropriate for a Christian can be applied to other Christians. St. Paul's refusal to compromise on the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" is mistakenly applied to a variety of musical and cultural matters by different Native American people, depending on their own tribal or missionary

tradition. This variety and the strength of local opinions is not unlike that of the Mennonite tribes.

A temptation of some is to "turn back the cultural clock" and try to teach Indian culture to Indian Christians. While the intentions are better than the mission efforts fifty years ago, the results are the same because the cultural expressions are still manipulated and not free. We must each trust the other's ability to hear God speak in the appropriate media. All we can do is share, through our own gifts, our joy in discovering God who is alive and present to us in all our affairs.

It has been heartening to me to see some increased appreciation for this beautiful, God-sent tradition of music that has come to Native American people. I have gained much in being part of this reawakening.

#### Notes

1. See Rodolphe Petter's letter to the Mennonite General Conference around 1940 in the archives at Bethel College, Newton, Kansas.

2. Robert Lowie was commenting on the wax cylinder recording he made of Crow music in the 1930s, archived in the Lowie Museum, Berkeley, California.

## In Review

*Cross and Sword: An Eyewitness History of Christianity in Latin America.* Edited by H. McKennie Goodpasture. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989, 314 pp., \$12.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Glendon Klaassen

The uniqueness of this book is described by the subtitle. It is not an interpretive study, but a primary source of original documents telling the story of five hundred years of Christian church history in Latin America. Editor Goodpasture is professor of church history and mission studies at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia.

The timing of this book is most appropriate as Latin America commemorates in 1992 the five-hundred-year anniversary since the "discovery" of the Americas by Europeans, who also brought Christianity to the region. I was introduced to this volume by Samuel Escobar, a Peruvian friend teaching at Eastern Baptist Seminary. He values this book, and I concur with his recommendation. This volume is for all involved in Latin America who wish to understand the reasons behind current developments.

This is a fascinating and illuminating collection of documents that give perspective to the general, historical developments as well as occasional specific local and regional histories as narrated by 118 witnesses. Beginning with a journal entry from Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and spanning the five centuries in an interview with a Lutheran missionary in Peru in 1983, these pages offer a great variety of reports and stories. Some are told with deep feeling that illicits profound reflections from the reader. These are witnesses of coercion and exploitation, and also of care and concern; of minority control over majority; of horrors and ecstacies; but all deal with the lives of people.

Goodpasture divides this book into three major periods of development whose boundaries have political and ecclesiastical significance: 1) the years 1492-1808 represent the colonial era and Roman Catholic dominance; 2) 1808-1962 represent religious diversity with a diminishing role of Roman Catholicism; and 3) 1960-1985 represent liberation struggles. Each period is subdivided into shorter segments. For each division as well as for each of the documents, Goodpasture gives a helpful introduction identifying source, date, and context.

It is difficult to be critical with a book that presents primary source materials with

little interpretation or evaluation. For all who wish to understand the Latin America situation, especially the religious scene of both Roman Catholic and Protestant faith, this book is essential. The rapid changes taking place today in Latin America must always be informed by such contextualized understandings. As the celebrations of the 500 years begin, it is appropriate to reflect on the "multitude of people ... consumed ... spreading destruction over the whole hemisphere ..." as B. de las Casas recorded in 1540 (p. 11).

Would not repentance and relinquishing control be even more appropriate than celebration for what happened and for what continues to shape the social, economic, political, and spiritual legacy of Latin America?

*Glendon Klaassen is employed by General Conference Mennonite Commission on Overseas Mission in Newton, Kansas.*

*Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization.* By Orlando E. Costas. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989, 189 pp., \$12.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Erwin Rempel

The manuscript for this book was completed in 1987 just before the untimely death of its author, Orlando E. Costas, at age 45. He authored several books including *The Church and Its Mission* (Tyndale, 1974), *The Integrity of Mission* (Harper & Row, 1979), and *Christ Outside the Gate* (Orbis, 1982).

"The practice of evangelization has been the passion of my ministerial career ..." are the words Orlando's wife, Rose L. Feliciano Costas, found scribbled on a piece of paper as Orlando, still in the hospital, began to prepare the book's preface. This passion is reflected throughout the book.

The book's purpose is to call the church to holistic evangelization. Costas engages in "a constructive, critical, contextual theological reflection on evangelization as a prophetic and apostolic task in the light of Scripture as a prophetic and apostolic text."

Of interest to Anabaptist readers is Costas' claim that the book is informed by a radical evangelical tradition with roots in the Anabaptist emphasis on evangelical ethics. It is also "informed by the experience of oppressed racial minority Christians in North America who are in solidarity with other oppressed groups and

poor minorities of the two thirds world."

This book represents Costas' final ministry to those engaged in global mission and is recommended for reading to missionaries, missiologists, and mission administrators.

*Erwin Rempel is executive secretary of the Commission on Overseas Mission for the General Conference Mennonite Church, located in Newton, Kansas.*

*Health, the Bible and the Church: Biblical Perspectives on Health and Healing.* By Dr. Daniel E. Fountain. Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, 1989, 228 pp., (pb)

Reviewed by Jake Friesen

Dr. Daniel E. Fountain holds an M.D. degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and a Masters of Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. He and his wife, Miriam, have served at the Vanga Evangelical Hospital in Zaire since 1961.

The stated purpose of this monograph is to contrast the secular and biblical worldview of our current practices of medicine and health; to study important principles of the biblical faith and their implications for Christian ministries of health and healing; to discover how to communicate effectively these principles to those who hold the worldview of another cultural perspective; and to plan strategies for the church to promote health and healing.

He accomplishes these purposes well by developing a theology of wellness that in many ways rebukes his own profession and at the same time summons churches to recover their rightful role as partners with physicians in working toward God's plan of wholeness for themselves and those around them. Local congregations are encouraged to develop a *ministry of healing* based on solid biblical foundations with a concern for the whole person.

The book challenges readers to rethink today's assumptions and practices of medical services both at home and abroad; it should be read by every Christian physician, health worker, and those interested in health issues and concerns.

*Jake Friesen, a medical doctor now in private practice in Reedley, California, was a medical missionary in India from 1952-72.*

**An African Tree of Life.** Thomas G. Christensen. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990, 184 pp., \$17.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Jacob A. Loewen

Thomas G. Christensen is a Lutheran missionary to the Gbaya and professor at the theological school in Meiganga, Cameroon. This volume (ASM #14) is based on his doctoral dissertation presented at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in 1984. It represents a welcome model of contextualizing the message of salvation through Jesus Christ in a West African society.

Central to much of Gbaya ritual in initiation, purification, reconciliation, and consecration is the *sore* tree, which the people call "our *sore*-cool-making-thing." Its branches placed between combatants, individual or collective, stop their aggression. *Sore* leaves in water are sure to remove evil, ill will, revenge, etc. Best of all, Gbaya Christians now call Jesus "our *sore*-cool-making-thing."

This study is a virtual sandwich with the first and the last two chapters dealing with contextual application and the "meat" being the ethnographic description of Gbaya ritual (ch. 4-11).

The value of the book lies in its sympathetic treatment of Gbaya ritual—albeit, largely through Gbaya Christian eyes—the openness it manifests in helping Gbaya Christians contextualize the gospel, and finally, in its appeal to sending churches to develop their own new metaphors and rituals to make the Christ of the gospels as relevant to their technological society as the *sore* metaphors have made God to the Gbaya.

From Abbotsford, British Columbia, Jacob A. Loewen is a retired missionary and translation consultant.

**Doing Theology with the Masai.** By Doug Priest, Jr. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1990, 240 pp., \$10.95 (pb)

Reviewed by David W. Shenk

**Doing Theology with the Masai** (also spelled Maasai) is a quest for the contextualization of the Maasai approach to sacrifice. For ten years, Doug Priest's family served with the Christian Missionary Fellowship among the Maasai in Tanzania and Kenya. A critical question they struggled

with was the extent to which traditional sacrificial practices could be expressed within the Christian community. This book attempts to answer that question.

To me, the strongest chapters are those describing Maasai sacrificial practices and their symbols. Those chapters present significant data that will be helpful to any missionary attempting to understand the Maasai. It is also a valuable anthropological contribution. A specific awareness of contemporary anthropological research into the phenomenon of sacrifice would have strengthened the book.

Priest differentiates between the Old Testament sacrifices that could be classified as negative (atonement for sin) or positive (thanksgiving), and applies it to the Maasai sacrificial system. He concludes that any sacrifices related to atonement should be terminated by Maasai who become Christians, because Christ is the final sacrifice. Sacrifices of thanksgiving may continue providing there is no mediational priest involved, because Christ is our high priest.

The issues raised are pertinent, and perhaps Priest's conclusions are correct. However, the hermeneutic and ecclesiology leading to these conclusions troubles me. The opening statement of the book indicates that Priest's perceptions are juxtaposed against those of a Maasai pastor who has served his people many years. That pastor feels that Christian Maasai cannot participate in any part of the sacrificial system. Priest disagrees, and this book is a defense of his position.

There is little evidence that Priest's conclusions have developed out of a vigorous hermeneutic within the believing Maasai community. Only several references indicate conversations of these issues with the Maasai believers. There is no indicated awareness of the hermeneutic which other churches in other societies within Kenya have engaged in in relation to the sacrificial system, nor is there acknowledgment that in earlier years hundreds of Kenyan Christians died as martyrs for refusing to participate in traditional sacrificial systems. Why did they feel so deeply about non-participation that they would lay down their lives?

I would have enjoyed more theologizing. The sacrificial system unlocks the key to the worldview of a people at a profound level. The descriptive passages are intriguing and most valuable. Yet the book does not really open the door into the worldview behind those sacrifices. However, Priest's book can be a valuable first step in understanding the significance of a

sacrificial system among a people who are turning toward Christ.

*Previously a missionary in Somalia and Kenya, David W. Shenk is now Director of Overseas Ministries for Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions, Salunga, Pennsylvania.*

**The Quiet Revolution: The Story of a Living Faith Around the World.** Edited by Robin Keeley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, 384 pp., \$16.95 (pb)

Reviewed by Hans Kasdorf

This is another volume in the Handbook Series created by Lion Publishing. An international team of editors have enlisted 63 contributors to give an up-to-date portrait of the Christian movement that is truly global in scope, content, and interpretation.

The book has three sections: part one treats larger Christian denominations as families or communions; part two describes Christianity on six continents; part three deals with the theoretical aspects of the Christian faith and how it is most appropriately disseminated and applied.

While the editors attempt to present a historical overview of the worldwide church, their approach to history is missiological and universal, rather than strictly historical and Western. Those looking for church history must look elsewhere; those looking for a kaleidoscope of contemporary expressions of Christian faith will find this book helpful.

Teachers and students of mission history, world Christianity, and missiology will use this as a reference book for its wealth of current information on the church in the global village, with its unique opportunities and challenges, crises and chaos. A general index, maps, charts, diagrams, and colored photographs add to its value and strength.

As one reviewer notes: "During the last generation a quiet revolution has been taking place. A faith once dominated by Westerners has taken off into Africa, Asia, and Latin America." Such is the nature of Christianity—it is "a dynamic faith, ever growing and spreading throughout the world."

*Hans Kasdorf is Professor of World Mission at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California.*

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Volume 18 (1990)

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## Editorial

Having recently worked through a manuscript on the concept of culture in Protestant missions by Charles R. Taber has impressed on me the multiple dimensions of the Christian mission. Even though missionaries may focus their efforts on a specific task—i.e., preaching the gospel—their presence and impact can touch many aspects of life, often in ways never anticipated. Taber observes that all people operated with a pre-critical understanding of culture prior to the nineteenth century. There were no conceptual tools available before that time. Only in the nineteenth century did people begin to speak about culture as an abstraction and begin to develop theories and tools of cultural analysis that would enable comparative and analytical studies. Prior to this time every group of people the world over thought of themselves as having culture and other people as being culturally deficient.

This change in outlook was aided and abetted by several developments. A major reason for this change was the Western military, economic, political, and cultural insertion in other cultures worldwide from the sixteenth century onward. The sheer change in the frequency and range of intercultural contact was bound to pose new questions.

A second contributor to this change in perspective was the modern missionary movement. In contrast to other aspects of the Western movement throughout the world, the Christian mission had at the center of its purpose personal transformation, which it assumed would be manifested in all aspects of life. Soldiers or merchants or settlers entertained no such ideas. They either pursued a policy of minimal interference with the local culture, as in the case of military expeditions, or assumed displacement of local peoples and their folkways, as in the case of settlers. What is often criticized in missionary practice can be traced to the fact that missionaries operated with the only known models and without the benefit of critical understandings.

By 1850, more and more missionaries and mission leaders were aware of the wrongness of this approach.

Out of this awareness came insistence on the importance of the indigenous culture, indigenous church, and vernacular languages. This insight did not, to be sure, produce instant results. It had to be worked out in one area after the other. In retrospect, the pace seems to have been unconscionably slow, and there were setbacks along the way.

One of the areas in which there was relatively late recognition of its importance for the development of the church *in loco* was liturgy and music. Yet today, as we observe the church in all its manifestations in specific cultures throughout the world, we notice that one of the most profound and reliable indicators that a particular church has struck root in the soil and heart of a people is the extent to which that church sings its faith in Jesus Christ using indigenous materials. A church which continues to rely on translated music usually has not fully internalized the Christian message. As Albert Friesen shows, there were pioneers who saw the importance of this early on, but their examples and challenges were generally ignored.

The story of the Dida people, guided by the Prophet Harris, is highly unusual, as James Krabill shows. In this instance, an indigenous church from the beginning used only indigenous materials as the medium for expressing their newly-adopted Christian faith. This has led to a prolific production of music among the Dida Harrist Church. The path followed by American Indian Christians has been much slower, as both Malcolm Wenger and David Graber show. Mary Oyer provides us with some useful general observations from the viewpoint of one who moved from a project in ethnohymnody among her own people—the North American Mennonites—to ethnomusicology in various parts of Africa, including African varieties of ethnohymnody. Taken together, these authors provide sufficient material to prod us all to think afresh about the faith/culture issue, especially in terms of music as a major element in Christian worship.

—Wilbert R. Shenk